THE IRISH AT THE FRONT

MICHAEL MacDONAGH

INTRODUCTION BY
JOHN REDMOND, M.P.

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PREFATORY NOTE

THIS narrative of the more signal feats of the Irish Regiments in France, Flanders, and at the Dardanelles, is based on letters of regimental officers and men, interviews with wounded soldiers of the battalions, and those invalided home, and, also, in several cases, on the records compiled at the depôts.

The war is the greatest armed struggle that the world has ever seen, and when we think of the heroism and resolution shown in it, the trials and the sufferings, the victories and the disasters, and then turn to the bald and trite official despatches, the dissimilitude of things, the contrast, is most abrupt and jarring. But so it is, and probably we must continue to rely upon the accounts given by the men in the fighting line for any real appreciation of the nature of the war.

MICHAEL MACDONAGH.

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A DAUNTLESS BATTLE LINE

THE IRISH REGIMENTS AND THEIR WAR HONOURS

IRELAND is represented in the fighting forces of the Empire by a regiment of Foot Guards, eight regiments of the Line, each of two Regular battalions, and with several linked battalions of the Special Reserve, or old Militia, and many Service battalions raised for "Kitchener's Army." Altogether, these various battalions of the Irish regiments number fifty-four. There are two Dragoon regiments and one regiment each of Hussars and Lancers. The Volunteer or Territorial system has not been extended to Ireland. Still, the country is not without representation in the Auxiliary Forces. She has raised two Yeomanry regiments, the South Irish Horse, and the North Irish Horse, and in England there are two predominantly Irish Territorial battalions, the London Irish Rifles (18th Battalion of the London Regiment) and the Liverpool Irish (8th Battalion of the King's Liverpool Regiment), both of which have "South Africa, 1900–02" as a battle honour. There are also tens of thousands of Irishmen in the English, Scottish, and Welsh regiments, the Artillery, the Engineers, the Army Medical Corps, as well as in the Royal Navy.

The following are the Irish Infantry and Cavalry regiments, with their badges and battle honours :—

IRISH GUARDS.

In acknowledgment and commemoration of the brave and honourable part taken by the Irish troops in the Boer

War an Irish regiment of Foot Guards was added to the Brigade of Guards in 1900 by command of Queen Victoria. Unlike the Scots Guards, which are largely English, the Irish Guards are almost exclusively Irish. Badges: the Cross of the Order of St. Patrick and the Shamrock. Recruiting area: all Ireland.

Royal Irish Regiment.

The Harp of Ireland, with the motto *Virtutis Namuriensis Præmium* ("The Reward of Bravery at Namur"), surmounted by a Crown and enwreathed with Shamrocks. Recruiting area: the Munster Counties of Tipperary and Waterford, and the Leinster Counties of Kilkenny and Wexford. Depôt, Clonmel.

The Sphinx, superscribed "Egypt." The Dragon, superscribed "China." "Namur, 1695"; "Blenheim"; "Ramillies," "Oudenarde"; "Malplaquet"; "Pegu"; "Sevastopol"; "New Zealand"; "Afghanistan, 1879-80"; "Tel-el-Kebir"; "Egypt, 1882"; "Nile, 1884-85"; "South Africa, 1900-02."

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.

A grenade with the Castle of Inniskilling flying the flag of St. George inscribed on the ball. Motto: *Nec aspera terrent* ("The harshest trials do not affright us"). Recruiting area: the Ulster Counties of Donegal, Derry, Tyrone, and Fermanagh. Depôt: Omagh town.

The Sphinx, superscribed "Egypt." "Martinique, 1762"; "Havannah"; "St. Lucia, 1778, 1796"; "Maida"; "Badajoz"; "Salamanca"; "Vittoria"; "Pyrenees"; "Nivelle"; "Orthes"; "Toulouse"; "Peninsula"; "Waterloo"; "South Africa, 1835, 1846-7"; "Central India"; "Relief of Ladysmith"; "South Africa, 1899-1902."

Royal Irish Rifles.

The Harp and Crown, with the motto *Quis Separabit?* ("Who shall divide us?") on a scroll beneath, and a bugle with strings, the symbol of a rifle regiment. Recruiting

area: the Ulster Counties of Antrim and Down, including the City of Belfast. Depôt: Belfast.

The Sphinx, superscribed "Egypt." "India"; "Cape of Good Hope, 1806"; "Talavera"; "Bourbon"; "Busaco"; "Fuentes d'Onor"; "Ciudad Rodrigo"; "Badajoz"; "Salamanca"; "Vittoria"; "Nivelle"; "Orthes"; "Toulouse"; "Peninsula"; "Central India"; "South Africa, 1899-1902."

Royal Irish Fusiliers.

A grenade with a French Imperial eagle and a wreath of laurel on the ball, surmounted by the Gaelic motto, *Faugh-a-Ballagh* ("Clear the Way"), the whole being set in a wreath of Shamrocks and surmounted by the Plume of the Prince of Wales. Recruiting area: the Ulster Counties of Armagh, Monaghan, and Cavan, and the Leinster County of Louth. Depôt: Armagh town.

The Sphinx, superscribed "Egypt." "Monte Video"; "Talavera"; "Barrosa"; "Java"; "Tarifa"; "Vittoria"; "Nivelle"; "Niagara"; "Orthes"; "Toulouse"; "Peninsula"; "Asia"; "Sevastopol"; "Tel-el-Kebir"; "Egypt, 1882, 1884"; "Relief of Ladysmith"; "South Africa, 1899-1902."

Connaught Rangers.

The Harp and Crown, with the motto, *Quis Separabit?* Recruiting area: all the Counties of Connaught—Galway, Roscommon, Mayo, Sligo, and Leitrim. Depôt: Galway.

The Elephant. The Sphinx, superscribed "Egypt." "Seringapatam"; "Talavera"; "Busaco"; "Fuentes d'Onor"; "Ciudad Rodrigo"; "Badajoz"; "Salamanca"; "Vittoria"; "Pyrenees"; "Nivelle"; "Orthes"; "Toulouse"; "Peninsula"; "Alma"; "Inkerman"; "Sevastopol"; "Central India"; "South Africa, 1877-8-9"; "Relief of Ladysmith"; "South Africa, 1899-1902."

Leinster Regiment.

The Plume of the Prince of Wales, encircled by a wreath of maple leaves, and surmounted by a Crown.

Recruiting area: the Leinster Counties of Longford, Meath, Westmeath, King's County, and Queen's County. Depôt: Birr.

"Niagara"; "Central India"; "South Africa, 1900-02."

Royal Munster Fusiliers.

The Shamrock and a grenade with the Royal Tiger on the ball. Recruiting area: the Munster Counties of Cork, Kerry, Limerick, and Clare. Depôt: Tralee.

"Plassey"; "Condore"; "Masulipatam"; "Budara"; "Buxar"; "Rohilcund, 1774"; "Sholinghur"; "Carnatic"; "Rohilcund, 1794"; "Guzerat"; "Deig"; "Bhurtpore"; "Ghunzee, 1839"; "Afghanistan, 1839"; "Ferozeshah"; "Sobraon"; "Chillianwallah"; "Goojerat"; "Punjaub"; "Pegu"; "Delhi, 1857"; "Lucknow"; "Burma, 1885-87"; "South Africa, 1899-1902."

Royal Dublin Fusiliers.

A grenade with the motto, *Spectamur Agendo* ("We are known by our deeds"), surmounted by a Crown; also the Arms of the City of Dublin set in a wreath of Shamrocks. Recruiting area: the Leinster Counties of Dublin, Kildare, Wicklow, and Carlow. Depôt: Naas.

The Royal Tiger, superscribed "Plassey"; "Buxar." The Elephant, superscribed "Carnatic"; "Mysore." "Arcot"; "Condore"; "Wandiwash"; "Pondicherry"; "Guzerat"; "Sholinghur"; "Nundy Droog"; "Amboyna"; "Ternate"; "Banda"; "Seringapatam"; "Kirkee"; "Maheidpoor"; "Beni Boo Alli"; "Asia"; "Aden"; "Mooltan"; "Goojerat"; "Punjaub"; "Pegu"; "Lucknow"; "Relief of Ladysmith"; "South Africa, 1899-1902."

4th (Royal Irish) Dragoon Guards.

The Harp and Crown, and the Star of the Order of St. Patrick.

"Peninsula"; "Balaklava"; "Sevastopol"; "Tel-el-Kebir"; "Egypt, 1882."

6th (Inniskilling) Dragoons.

The Castle of Inniskilling with the St. George's flag, and the word "Inniskilling" underneath.

"Dettingen"; "Warburg"; "Willens"; "Waterloo"; "Balaklava"; "Sevastopol"; "South Africa, 1899–1902."

5th (Royal Irish) Lancers.

The Harp and Crown with the motto *Quis Separabit?*

"Blenheim"; "Ramillies"; "Oudenarde"; "Malplaquet"; "Suakim, 1885"; "Defence of Ladysmith"; "South Africa, 1899–1902."

8th (King's Royal Irish) Hussars.

The Harp and Crown with the motto *Pristinae virtutis memores* ("We are mindful of our ancient glory").

"Leswarree"; "Hindoostan"; "Alma"; "Balaklava"; "Inkerman"; "Sevastopol"; "Central India"; "Afghanistan, 1879–80"; "South Africa, 1900–02."

THE IRISH AT THE FRONT

INTRODUCTION

"Though I am an Englishman, I must say the Irish soldiers have fought magnificently. They are the cream of the Army. Ireland may well be proud of her sons. Ireland has done her duty nobly. Irishmen are absolutely indispensable for our final triumph."—Letter from Brigadier-General W. B. Marshal, of the 29th Division, on service at the Dardanelles.

"Your Irish soldiers are the talk of the whole Army. . . . Their landing at Suvla Bay was the greatest thing that you will ever read of in books. Those who witnessed the advance will never forget it. . . . God! the men were splendid."—Captain Thornhill, of the New Zealand Force.

"As you know, I am not Irish. I have no Irish connections whatever. In fact, I was rather opposed to the granting of Home Rule; but now, speaking honestly and calmly, after having witnessed what I did—the unparalleled heroism of these Irishmen—I should say nothing is too good to give the country of which they are, or rather were, such worthy representatives. My God! it was grand. It filled one with admiration and envy. . . . I have no religion, but it was most charming and edifying to see these fine chaps with their beads and the way in which they prayed to God. We are all brothers, but to my dying day I bow to the Irish."—Letter from a Scottish soldier at Gallipoli.

"Tell Ireland she may well be proud of the Irish Division. No men could have fought more gallantly or achieved better results. More of our countrymen are required to beat the Germans. I am certain that Ireland will respond as enthusiastically now as she has always done throughout her past history. Eire go brath!"—Lt.-General Sir Bryan Mahon, Commanding the 10th (Irish) Division.

It is these soldiers of ours, with their astonishing courage and their beautiful faith, with their natural military genius, with their tenderness as well as strength; carrying with them their green flags and their Irish war-pipes; advancing to the charge, their fearless officers at their head, and followed by their beloved chaplains as great-hearted as themselves; bringing with them a quality all their own to the sordid modern battlefield; exhibiting the character of the Irishman at its noblest and greatest—it is these soldiers of ours to whose keeping the Cause of Ireland has passed to-day. It was never in worthier, holier keeping than that of these boys, offering up their supreme sacrifice of life with a smile on their lips because it was given for Ireland. May God bless them! And may Ireland, cherishing them in her bosom, know how to prove her love and pride and send their brothers leaping to keep full their battle-torn ranks and to keep high and glad their heroic hearts!

I find it hard to come within the compass and key suitable for a Preface when I am asked to write a few pages to introduce a book about our Irish soldiers. Too many things surge up demanding expression—gratitude, appreciation of the significance of what they are doing, anxiety that Ireland may play the part to them that history has assigned to her. I must only do the best I can and select a few points to remark upon.

And, first, let me remark upon this point about which there is now universal agreement. The war has brought into view again what had been somewhat obscured of late: the military qualities of the Irish race. There are now, throughout the armies in the field and throughout the world which follows their fortunes, no two opinions upon this point. I quote among the words at the head of this Preface the tribute of an English General at the Dardanelles which I have

seen in a recent letter, because it is typical of the military opinion one hears on every hand, and because for his generous praise he has found an expression which well sums up the general verdict. The Irish soldiers, he says, are "the cream of the Army." On the Western front I heard the same idea put in another pointed phrase: "We always look upon an Irish regiment as a *corps d'élite*." The war, in short, is proving anew the experience which other wars—and other armies under other flags—have so often tested, and which makes it a maxim with British Generals, as it was in Sir Ralph Abercrombie's day, always to try and have some Irish troops included in their commands, if possible, to be on hand for work about which no risks of failure can be taken and for which an inspiring lead is essential. It is proving again that the Irish people, like their racial kinsmen the French, are one of the peoples who have been endowed in a distinguished degree with a genuine military spirit, a natural genius and gift for war which produces born soldiers and commanders, and which is the very reverse of the brute appetite for slaughter. Irish soldiers may be few in comparison with the scale of modern armies. They bulked larger in the armies of Wellington, of which they formed the backbone, when the proportions of population were different. They may be comparatively few, but their quality is admittedly precious. As the English General above quoted says, they are an "absolutely indispensable" ingredient.

I shall have to talk about the Irish soldiers in this Preface; and I want any comrade of theirs who is not Irish who may chance to see these lines, and any other reader who is not Irish, to bear in mind that it is about Irish soldiers I am intended to talk here, and not about others; that that is my business here; and I would beg them to understand that in fulfilling this

duty I am not overlooking for a moment the renown of English, Scottish, Welsh, or Dominion soldiers. Also, I would like to tell them this: that it is from the Irish soldiers—and I have listened to it from their lips again and again—you will hear the heartiest and warmest tributes to the valour and staunchness of their British and Dominion comrades. These gallant comrades, I know, will be the last to begrudge us the pious task of making some record of the Irishmen's work who have fought and died by their side, and of trying to add, as her sons would wish, to Ireland's honour through their deeds. The official record has not been copious, and Ireland may be pardoned the watchfulness of a mother's pride.

Let me turn from the soldiers themselves for a moment to look at the significance of the part they are playing before history. It is important for Ireland, and I am sure it is also important for the British Empire, and perhaps for America as well, to appreciate the part taken by the Irish troops in this war. The war, which in a night changed so many things, offered to Ireland a new international place, and her brave sons, not hesitating, acting upon a sure and noble instinct, have leaped forward to occupy it for her. After long struggles the Irish people had won back from England a series of rights—ownership of the land, religious equality, educational freedom, local self-government—an advance which had coincided with and been helped by the emancipation and rise of British democracy. The culmination was reached when in the session of 1914 the Imperial Parliament passed the Act to establish national self-government. Ireland had said, "Trust me with this, and I will wipe out the past and be loyal to the Empire"; and the answer—somewhat long delayed, no doubt, but still it came—was the King's signature to the Government of Ireland Act. Thus when the

war arrived Ireland had at once a charter of rights and liberties of her own to defend, and, like Botha's South Africa, her plighted word to make good. The war by a most fortunate conjunction united in a common cause the defence of England against a mighty danger and the defence of principles for which Ireland, to be true to herself, must ever be ready to raise her voice or draw her sword. Besides her honour and her interest—her interest, always the last thing to move her, but now happily involved in the same cause —human Freedom, Justice, Pity, and the cry of the small nationality crushed under the despot's heel appealed to her. These things she has followed throughout her history, mostly, up to now, to her bitter loss, but not to the loss of her soul; in that is her distinction now. Her sons, fighting for her honour and her interest, are fighting for these things too. It is for these things—Honour, Justice, Freedom, Pity—she will stand in that new place of influence she is winning in the world's councils. There, acting with and through her sister democracies, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Great Britain —in all of which, as in the great Republic of the West, her children are a potent leaven—her spirit will help to bend the British Empire to a mission of new significance for humanity. That is the heritage of her tradition. It was in that spirit her sons went throughout Europe influencing the world of a thousand years ago. That is the spirit her sons are illustrating upon the field of war to-day.

Ireland has chosen this path. I would pause for a moment further to ask people to think a little on this: suppose she had, as well she might with her history, and as some of her sons both at home and in America have wanted her to do, chosen a different alternative? Ireland's strength as an international factor is not to be measured only by her political position at the heart

of the Empire or her strategic position in the Atlantic, or by the size of her population at home, but also by the millions of her kin throughout the Empire and America, whose deep and enduring sentiment for her, linked as it is with their distinguished and never-tarnished loyalty to the new lands of their adoption, is one of the striking facts of modern history. Germany understands this factor; and keeps on making unceasing and ingenious efforts, especially in the United States, to make her account with it.

For Ireland to have chosen the opposite alternative, or to be flung into it by the fortune of war, would in my opinion be for her an unmixed calamity, the worst in her history. Her fate as a possession of Germany, as Germany's western fortress, naval base, Heligoland of the Atlantic, would from the nature of the case be far worse than that of Prussian Poland, Schleswig, and Alsace for the last forty years. Only those who are ignorant of Prussianism and its most recent methods—methods followed long ago by every tyrannical Power, including the England of the past, but which Prussia still maintains as a menacing anachronism in the age of democracy—have any illusions upon this matter. The Irish people, with a few insignificant exceptions, have no such illusions. They have, for the first time in their history—a memorable fact—put a national army into the field, a glorious army! And they have put that army in the field for the express purpose of defending Ireland from such a fate and of doing their share in helping to rescue the unfortunate and heroic peoples who have already fallen under it.

With the Irishmen already serving, or who obeyed the call as reserves when war was declared, and those who have volunteered since the war, the Irish army in the field has amounted to 154,038 men to this date, and this number is being increased and replenished at

the rate of about a thousand men a week. More than a hundred thousand have volunteered since the war, and before the year is out it is our hope that at least half another hundred thousand will have followed their example. To these may be added for Ireland's credit the officially acknowledged Irish units in Great Britain, such as the "London Irish," the "Liverpool Irish," the "Tyneside Irish" (a brigade). But account cannot be taken, though their existence may be noted, of the many thousands of Irish in English and Scottish regiments and in the Canadian and Australian forces. There are some special Irish Colonial units, too, apart from the Irish, in practically every Colonial battalion, such as the Vancouver Irish Fusiliers and the Quebec Irish Regiment. A short time ago General Botha's wife at Capetown presented green flags to a South African Irish regiment. But it is the army raised in Ireland itself which is our more special concern here, for that is the army which it is Ireland's privilege and duty to maintain at its full strength in the field; and that consists of the regular battalions of the historic Irish regiments and of three specific new Irish Divisions with "service" battalions of the same regiments. Each of the new Divisions is under the command of a distinguished Irish General. The three together would constitute an Army Corps. The formation of these three Irish Divisions is a fact of great note. It is the first time Ireland is officially represented in the field by a larger unit than the regiment.

It is to be noted that this book only deals with the achievements of the old Irish regiments, and one of the new Irish Divisions, namely, the 10th. The 16th Irish Division, the 36th Irish Division, and the Tyneside Irish Brigade have only recently gone to the Front.

From letters home from men and officers, from the speeches of Generals delivered immediately after an action, and sometimes sent home in a letter or an

order of the day, from the spontaneous testimony of onlookers of other corps rather than from official reports, the record, so far, of these Irish levies, old and new, is put together. Official mentions are scant. The official account given by Admiral de Robeck of the landing and taking of "V" Beach, with its sunken wire entanglements, one of the most extraordinary of deeds, and valuable in results in spite of the appalling cost to the Irish battalions who accomplished it, for it rendered the landing of the troops that arrived later safe—a feat which General Sir Hunter Weston next day declared to be "without parallel in the history of feats of arms"—did not even mention the names of the glorious Irish regiments—although the names of the regiments concerned in all the other landings were given with eulogies. General Hamilton, in explanation of his meagre references to the Tenth Division at Suvla, says he found it difficult to obtain "living human details." I do not refer to this by way of complaint, though I hope this omission may yet be officially set right. The thing is past, and there is going, we hope, to be a great change in such matters in future. Besides, the facts get known. Such deeds cannot be hidden—they are too great. I refer to the matter to explain why it is that books like this, imperfect as it is, have to be compiled. Other volumes like it will have to supplement the tale. We Irish are determined that henceforth the doings of our armies in the field shall not be in vain in any sense. Piously shall we glean the record, whether official or unofficial, and what our men, our officers, and our Generals think ought to be known shall no longer, so far as we can help it, remain unknown. Our brave lads in the battle-line may rest assured that their country is lovingly and proudly watching them, and that the sacrifice they make in her name will, as they wish it—for their wish is the same as the dying Sarsfield's on the field of Landen—go to her profit.

The record so far brings Ireland great honour. And this excites no jealousy in the Army—for it is from the other corps in the Army itself comes the most generous testimony to the work of the Irish soldiers and the most comrade-like regret where it is thought there has been lack of recognition. What stands out is that on every front, and whether new levies or regulars, the work of the Irish troops has not only been of great merit in every instance, but of exceptional merit, and they have to their credit some of the most splendid and astonishing achievements. The Irish Guards at Mons, the Royal Irish Regiment at Ypres, the London Irish at Loos (dribbling a football before them as they charged—the boys in the trenches, before the charge, holding out the matches with which they had lit their cigarettes to show each other that their hands were not shaking), the regular battalions at "V" Beach, the new "service" battalions of the Tenth Division at Sulva, I name out of a long list to illustrate this statement. To General Mahon's Division, composed exclusively of new levies who were civilians when the war began—thousands of Nationalist families in Leinster, Munster, and Connaught represented its ranks—the terrific open fighting at Suvla Bay (which began with the shelling of the lighters at the landing and the bursting of chains of contact mines as they set foot on shore) was their first experience of being under fire. Undismayed, their coolness undisturbed, they formed for attack as if on the parade ground. These were the "freshies" spoken of in the letter partly quoted above of Captain Thornhill, himself a representative of those magnificent Australian and New Zealand troops whose prowess has been another of the revelations of the war. "The Empire can do with a heap more 'freshies' of the Irish brand," he writes. "Their landing at Suvla Bay was the greatest thing you will ever read of in books by high-brows. Those that

witnessed the advance will never forget it. Bullets and shrapnel rained on them, yet they never wavered. . . . God! the men were splendid. The way they took that hill (now called Dublin Hill) was the kind of thing that would make you pinch yourself to prove that it was not a cheap wine aftermath. How they got there Heaven only knows. As the land lay, climbing into hell on an aeroplane seemed an easier proposition than taking that hill."[1] It may be well to point out, for it bears upon one of the popular fallacies about Irish character, that it is not only in the desperate charge or the forlorn hope that Irish soldiers have proved their worth in this or other wars. They have shown it equally in the tenacity, grim yet cheerful, with which for days and weeks and months difficult positions are held and bitter hardships borne. Again, let it be noted what this whole young Tenth Division proved itself fit for after its months at Gallipoli. When it was decided to occupy Salonika and to march to the aid of the Serbian army it was to the Irish Division, under their splendid Irish commander,

[1] One is reminded of tributes to Meagher's Brigade at Fredericksburg in the American Civil War. "Braver men," writes Horace Greely, in his "American Conflict," "never smiled at death. Never did men fight better or die, alas! more fruitlessly than did Hancock's corps, especially Meagher's Irish Brigade, composed of the 63rd, 69th, and 88th New York, 28th Massachusetts, and the 116th Pennsylvania, which dashed itself repeatedly against those impregnable heights, until two-thirds of its numbers strewed the ground" (vol. ii., p. 345). In the same book Greely quotes the following from the correspondent of the London *Times*, watching the battle from the heights, and writing from Lee's headquarters: "To the Irish Division commanded by General Meagher was principally committed the desperate task of bursting out of the town of Fredricksburg and forming under the withering fire of the confederate batteries to attack Marye's Heights. Never at Fontenoy, Albuera, or at Waterloo was more undoubted courage displayed by the sons of Erin than during those six frantic attacks which they directed against the almost impregnable position of the foe."

General Sir Bryan Mahon, that the place of honour for this desperate enterprise was given. Coming straight from their hard service in the Peninsula, they performed in the Serbian mountain passes above Lake Doiran what General Sarrail, the eminent French Commander, the vanquisher of the Crown Prince's Army at Verdun, has pronounced to be one of the most striking feats of arms of the whole war. Acting as a rearguard against an army ten times their number, they did what was neither expected nor counted upon. But their instinctive military genius, as well as their courage and determination, came into play, and they held up the overwhelming enemy for so long and with such skill that the entire French and British forces were able to withdraw safely to their defensive positions without the loss of a single gun or a single transport wagon.

One seems to be verging on exaggeration in these accounts, but the thing is bare truth, and I am striving to bring out what has been done for Ireland by the character of these troops. I have indicated their martial quality. But they have brought another quality into the field which is equally characteristic and therefore should at least be mentioned here, and which, perhaps, in the circumstances of the time, deserves a special reference. That is, their religious spirit. Everybody has remarked it. The Irish soldier, with his limpid faith and his unaffected piety, his rosary recited on the hillside, his Mass in the ruined barn under shell-fire, his "act of contrition" in the trench before facing the hail of the assault, his attitude to women, has been mostly a singular impression. And his chaplain! The Irish battalion must have its chaplain as well as its colonel, and both must be of the best. The chaplains of every denomination and of every corps have made a noble name for themselves in this war; but I am speaking here only of

the Irish chaplains—of the men like Father Finn, killed at "V" beach, refusing to stay behind on the ship because, as he answered, "The place of the chaplain is with the dying soldier"; and like Father Gwynn, of the Irish Guards, killed at the French front, of whom his battalion commander, a Protestant Irishman, writes these words: "No words of mine could express or even give a faint idea of the amount of good he has done us all out here, or how bravely he has faced all dangers, and how cheerful and comforting he has always been. It is certainly no exaggeration to say that he was loved by every officer, N.C.O., and man in the battalion. The Irish Guards owe him a deep and lasting debt of gratitude, and as long as any of us are left who saw him out here, we shall never forget his wonderful life, and shall strive to lead a better life by following his example." This quality of our soldiers appears to have impressed observers, as well as their fighting quality. It is referred to again and again, and the same transference of thought from the character of the men to the cause of their country, as appears in one of the letters above quoted from a Scottish soldier, a spectator of "V" beach, occurs repeatedly: "The race that can produce such men, who did such glorious work for the Empire, has the most perfect right to get the freedom of its country and the right to rule it. . . . There is not a man in the service but who would willingly do anything now for the Irish people—yes, the Irish Catholics."

Thus we see that our Irish troops in this war are fulfilling a mission. As I said at the outset, it is into their keeping, with the eyes of the world upon them, that the cause of their country for the time being has passed. The influence of their action upon her fortunes will extend far beyond the immediate effects which will appear the moment the war is over.

No people can be said to have rightly proved their nationhood and their power to maintain it until they have demonstrated their military prowess; and though Irish blood has reddened the earth of every continent, never until now have we as a people set a national army in the field. I have written vainly if I have not shown, moreover, that never was a people more worthily represented in the field than we are to-day by these Irish soldiers. It is heroic deeds entering into their traditions that give life to nations—that is the recompense of those who die to perform them—and to Fontenoy, Cremona, Fredericksburg, and the rest, these soldiers of the Irish people to-day have added Mons, Ypres, Loos, "V" beach, Suvla Bay, Lake Doiran. How do the Irish people regard their armies in the field? How do their brothers at home regard these brothers in the battle line, who, at the call of danger and national opportunity, by passing into the soldier's panoply have lifted the name of Irishmen to a new plane in the world's eyes, and opened to their country's cause a new outlook? To themselves the same opportunity of ennoblement comes. The ranks of their brothers in the field are thinning under the wastage of war. Will they keep them filled? Aye, will they! I have given my life-time, such as it has been, to the service of Ireland in a deep faith in the essential nobility and wisdom of the Irish people. I should be untrue to that faith if for a moment I had any doubt on this matter—if I could harbour for a moment the idea that the young men of Ireland could think unmoved of the wistful bewildered faces of their noble brothers while they held back, could watch the ranks of the Irish armies thinning, and the glorious regiments, brigades, and divisions gradually filling up with others than Irish soldiers until their character as Irish armies finally vanished and ceased to exist—and something,

I fear, would go with that character which Ireland might never get back. No, the Irish race has not changed, as these very soldiers have proved. Chivalry is of its essence, and nations who do not want to die, but to live, as Ireland does, must act through their essential qualities. Those brave sons in the field need not fear for the honour they have won for their country. Their brothers are coming to them. Ireland's armies will be maintained.

J. E. REDMOND.

February, 1916

CHAPTER I

THE RETREAT FROM MONS

HOW THE MUNSTERS SAVED THE GUNS AND GOT RINGED ROUND WITH FIRE

REGULAR battalions of all the Irish regiments were included in the British Expeditionary Force which left for France, at the outbreak of war, in the early weeks of August, 1914. For its size it was the finest Army that the world has ever seen, in equipment, discipline, and martial ardour. It was commanded by Field-Marshal Sir John French, the scion of an Irish family long settled in Roscommon, of which Lord De Freyne is the head, and a soldier who made a brilliant reputation as a cavalry leader in the South African War.

On the morning of Sunday, August 23rd, two of the three Army Corps which composed the Force were extended along a front of twenty-five miles east and west of Mons, a Belgian town of 25,000 inhabitants and the centre of coal mining, iron, and glass works. In the First Corps, under Sir Douglas Haig, were the 1st Irish Guards, the 2nd Munster Fusiliers, and the 2nd Connaught Rangers. The Second Corps, under Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, included the 2nd Irish

Rifles and the 2nd Royal Irish Regiment. The 4th Royal Irish Dragoons were with the cavalry. An Irish trooper of that regiment on outpost duty had the distinction of opening the Great War between England and Germany by firing the first shot, which brought down a Uhlan officer, in the early hours of Saturday, August 22nd, fifteen miles beyond Mons, on the road to Brussels.

The Battle of Mons, the first encounter in force between the British and the Germans, commenced at twenty minutes to one o'clock on Sunday, August 23rd. Not a German was then in sight. But an enemy aeroplane hovered overhead, like a hawk peering for prey in the fields and hedges, and there was a burst of shrapnel over the British lines, followed by the booming of distant artillery. An attack so soon was unexpected. The bells of Mons had been ringing for the Sunday services, as usual, all the morning, and the Cathedral was crowded with worshippers at the High Mass when the sound of the German guns broke startlingly in upon their devotions. It was a beautiful day, and many of the men in one of the Irish regiments billeted in a farmyard close to the town were bare but for their trousers—availing themselves of the warm sunshine to wash and dry their shirts and socks after their long tramp in France and Belgium—when the bugles rang out "Stand to arms." The Germans were unseen, but having on Saturday beaten the French at Charleroi—to the British right—they were advancing in overwhelming numbers, under Von Kluck, in the cover of the woods, railway embankments and hedgerows. Soon the sharp crackle of musketry was added to the cannonading of the guns, and the sabre and lance of cavalry gleamed in the sun.

The first of the Irish regiments to exchange shots with the enemy's infantry were the 2nd Rifles, who suffered severely, holding a position in the suburbs

of Mons. The 2nd Royal Irish Regiment defended a village behind the town, and on the main road leading south. A Gordon Highlander named Smiley says the Irish were "fearfully cut up" when his company, about two miles behind, were directed to advance to their relief. The Gordons crept up the road, and reached the trenches of the Irish at dusk. Another Gordon says:—"When we got to the trenches the scene was terrible. The Irish were unprepared for the sudden attack. They were having dinner when the Germans opened on them, and their dead and wounded were lying all around."

The Irish Guards, who lay to the east of Mons, on the British right, had, as the regiment's first experience of warfare, to meet the shock of a cavalry charge. One of the most popular recruiting posters in the early days of the war was a picture of a comical-looking Tommy on the field of battle. He was represented striking a match to light his pipe, and saying, with a devil-may-care glint in his roguish eye, "Half a mo', Kaiser," while German horsemen in the background were charging towards him. The idea was suggested to the artist by an incident in the encounter between the Irish Guards and the Germans at Mons. "I am told," says an English newspaper correspondent, "that when the German cavalry were only 200 yards away one Irish Guardsman momentarily put down his rifle and begged a cigarette of a comrade, which he coolly lit. Then they 'prepared to receive cavalry,' and did it in better order and with much less excitement than if they had been about to witness the finish of a St. Leger." In this we have an example of the easy bearing in the presence of the advancing foe for which, by all accounts, the Irish are remarkable. Such imperturbability springs not so much from contempt of the enemy, as from confidence in their own prowess. The two front ranks were

kneeling, and presenting a double row of steel. Their virgin bayonets, seen now for the first time on a field of battle, glittered as sharp and terrible as if they had around them the halo of a hundred victories. Standing behind were two other ranks who poured a stream of rifle fire into the German horsemen. So the Irish Guards met the whirlwind of galloping horses and flashing swords, and drove back the survivors in a ragged, straggling line. They were eager to start winning battle honours for their banners, and Mons is a brilliant opening of a list that promises to be lengthy and crowded before this Great War terminates.

Then came the order for a general retreat of the British forces. In the evening Sir John French found out that he was vastly outnumbered in men and guns —250,000 Germans to 82,000 British—and saw that if his Army were to escape being outflanked and annihilated they must retire until they got behind some substantial line of natural defence which they could hope to hold against such fearful odds.

The retreat lasted twelve days. It was one long drawn-out rearguard action. The fighting took place along a line of about twenty-five miles and backwards for a distance of about eighty miles, which was covered by forced marches at night as well as by day. Hardly for an hour were the British permitted any rest or respite. They were continually harassed by enormous masses of the enemy who by thundering at their heels and striking at their flanks sought to turn the retreat into a rout. In that the Germans completely failed. The retirement was a splendid military achievement. It was also an episode of intense dramatic interest, and though I am necessarily concerned only with the part taken by the Irish regiments in the ordeal, it was made memorable for all time by feats of unparalleled

heroism and endurance by every arm of the Service, and each and all of the nationalities represented in it.

The British rearguard frequently gave battle to their pursuers, holding them in check or sending them staggering back with the vehemence of the blow. On Wednesday, August 26th, the first stand was made on the Cambrai—Le Cateau—Landrecies line. Here it was that the 2nd Connaught Rangers gave the Germans another unpleasant taste of the fighting quality of the Irish. "It was a grand time we had, and I wouldn't have missed it for lashin's of money," says a private of the regiment in a racy account of the episode. "The Germans kept pressing our rearguard all the time. They were at least five to one, and we were in danger of being cut off. At last the Colonel could stand it no longer, so the word was passed round that we were to give them hell and all. 'Rangers of Connaught,' says he, 'the eyes of all Ireland are on you to-day, and I know you never could disgrace the old country by allowing Germans to beat you while you have arms in your hands and hearts in your breasts. Up, then, and at them, and if you don't give them the soundest thrashing they ever got you needn't look me in the face again in this world—or the next!' And we went for them with just what you would know of a prayer to the Mother of Our Lord to be merciful to the loved ones at home if we should fall in the fight. We charged through and through them until they broke and ran like frightened hares in terror of hounds."

That same day one Division of the Third Army Corps was brought hurriedly up by train to Le Cateau. In it were three other Irish regiments—1st Irish Fusiliers, 2nd Dublin Fusiliers, and 2nd Inniskilling Fusiliers They went straight into action to protect one of the flanks of the resumed retirement. In a fight near Le Cateau the Inniskillings lost many

officers and men. The Dublins were at Cambrai. They appear to have been uproariously and outrageously Irish. A few weeks later the London correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* gave some interesting extracts from a letter written by an English officer of the Dublins. He said that while the men were waiting for the Germans they sang "The Wearing of the Green" and "God Save Ireland." One of the officers remarked, by way of a joke, "We have heard enough all day of your damned Fenian songs, boys; give us something else." The boys then struck up, the officer says, a song called "Dear Old Ireland." This ballad, by T. D. Sullivan, tells in stirring verses and chorus, set to a rousing air, of some of the habits and customs of Ireland, and of the affection she inspires. One verse runs:—

> "We've seen the wedding, and the wake, the pattern and the fair,
> The well-knit frames at the grand old games in the kindly Irish air;
> The loud 'Hurroo,' we've heard it, too; and the thundering 'Clear the way!'
> Ah, dear old Ireland, gay old Ireland, Ireland, boys, hurrah."

It was not the first time that the song was heard on a field of battle. On that night in December, 1863, in the American Civil War, when the Federals and Confederates were bivouacked on the banks of the Rappahannock awaiting the dawn to commence the bloody fight for Fredericksburg, an Irish regiment in the service of the North sang the song as they sat by their camp fires. Was that a tremendous echo that came across the river?—

> "For Ireland, boys, hurrah; for Ireland, boys, hurrah!
> Here's dear old Ireland; fond old Ireland—
> Ireland, boys, hurrah!"

The Irishmen of the North listened intently. Then it

came upon them with wild surprise that the chorus had been taken up by an Irish regiment in the service of the South!

The officers of the Dublin Fusiliers at Cambrai were not scandalised, nor did they put on a severe air, when they heard these rebelly songs, survivals of a dead past, and yet deeply moving for the national memories clustering round them. On the contrary, like good regimental officers, they welcomed them, as they would probably have welcomed anything that helped to raise the hearts of their men in their hour of trial. "As my old brother-officer observes," says the writer of the letter, "'These confounded Fenians can fight. Four times within one hour my blackguards drove a charge home with the bayonet.'"

That day was a most critical one for the British. The Second Army Corps was streaming southwards. But Von Kluck was making a determined effort to outflank and envelop the First Army Corps. The Corps escaped the net with the loss of one of their finest regiments, the 2nd Munster Fusiliers, killed, wounded, and made prisoners. It was the most tragic event of the retreat. A day or two previously the Munsters were entrenched behind six guns of Field Artillery. Uhlans swept down upon the battery and killed the gunners. Then two companies of the Munsters charged with fixed bayonets, and put the Germans to flight. But what was to be done with the guns? All the horses had been killed, and time was pressing. Were the guns to be lost after all? The thought never entered into the heads of the Munsters. By putting themselves into harness, with a few light cavalry horses which they had captured from the Uhlans, they pulled the guns away. "As we had not enough horses," said a wounded Munster in hospital at Tralee, "we made mules of ourselves, for we were not such asses as to leave the guns to the enemy."

The guns were brought back five miles, where horses were available to relieve the Munsters.

On the night of August 26th the regiment were rear-guard to the retiring First Army. They held two cross-roads between Chapeau Rouge to the north, and Fesney to the south, and had orders to keep watch over these important positions until they got word to fall back. It is said the word was sent not once, but thrice—the first during the night—but only one reached them the following afternoon, and then it was too late. The other despatch-riders lost their way, or were shot or made prisoners. The result was that the Munsters were left in the lurch while the mass of the First Corps, unaware of their comrades' desperate position, were hurrying away to the south. At dawn, as the regiment lay concealed behind the hedgerows and in the beet fields of the farmsteads and in the orchards laden with fruit, they were discovered by a German patrol. The enemy at once surrounded them on three sides and attacked with vastly superior forces. "The Germans came at us from all points, horse, foot and artillery and all," said one of the survivors, "and the air was raving with shouting, screaming men waving swords and rifles and blazing away at us like blue murder." To add to their troubles the rain was falling in torrents, drenching the men to the skin.

The officers decided to withdraw to the village of Etreux, a few miles back, where they hoped to find the shelter of a position of defence which might help them to hold up the Germans, despite the terrific odds on the side of the enemy. The battalion retired by companies—two companies covering the withdrawal of one another in turns. In fighting these rear-guard actions the men sought cover wherever they could find it—crouching in farm buildings, and behind wagons, walls, and heaps of stones, firing at the ever-advancing Germans. The Munsters were grimly

silent until it came to bayonet fighting between khaki and grey, and then the air was rent with yells of rage and hate, shrieks of pain, and the low wailing sobbing of the Irish keen.

During the retirement a despatch-rider reached the Munsters. He had a message for them to retire "at once." It was not timed, but it was probably the last of the three orders sent from Headquarters, and was therefore written hurriedly. It seems also to have been written many hours before it was delivered, as the bearer said he had been compelled to hide for a long time from the Germans. But it was too late. The Munsters were encircled by a ring of fire. The enemy had worked round to their rear and now barred the way to the village of Etreux. Major Paul Charrier, described as a hearty, genial Kerryman, was in command of the Munsters. Three times he gallantly led his men in an attack upon the key of the German position, a large mansion that was loopholed and turned into a fortress. He was twice wounded, yet he continued to lead, and in the last assault he fell to rise no more with a bullet in his head. Eight other officers were also dead. Six of the survivors were disabled. Between four and five hundred of the rank and file were killed or wounded. Ammunition was run out. Not another cartridge was to be found by the men in the bandoliers of their dead and dying comrades. It was then 9 p.m. The men listened for sounds of approaching relief, but none was heard. There was nothing left for the remnant of the battalion, reduced to four officers and 256 non-commissioned officers and men, but to surrender. Only 155 men got out of the trap, and most of these belonged to the regimental transport. It came out afterwards that the Munsters had been engaged against seven battalions of German infantry, three batteries of artillery, many cavalry, and many Maxim guns.

So impressed were the Germans by the bravery of those Irish lads that they paid every respect to the living and the dead. Captain H. S. Jervis, the senior surviving officer, in letters written to the bereaved wives and mothers of his fellows, states that the next day the Germans allowed him to send out a burial party of his own men. "They found Paul Charrier lying as he had fallen, head towards the enemy," he tells Mrs. Charrier. "The sergeant told me he looked as if he were asleep. They buried him, with eight other officers of the regiment, in a grave separate from the men." More than that, when the Germans learnt that their prisoners were Irish and Catholic they sent for one of their own Catholic chaplains to read the service for the dead at the graveside of the rank and file.

Sir Conan Doyle, in a lecture on "The Great Battles of the War," delivered in London, made the remark: "If ever surrender was justifiable it was so in these circumstances." That was said before full and authentic reports of what happened, including the composition of the overwhelming forces that surrounded the Munsters, had come from the officers imprisoned in Germany, which will be found in a little pamphlet called "The Munsters," written by Mrs. Victor Rickard, the widow of a brave man who afterwards commanded the battalion and fell at Rue Du Bois. The military lesson of the episode, in the opinion of Conan Doyle, is that great attention should be paid to making known the real situation to troops operating at a distance, and the miscarriage of the messages sent to the Munsters makes pertinent the telling here of a story, on the authority of a wounded corporal of the Gloucestershire Regiment, of a splendid example of Irish resolution and endurance in the operations on the Aisne later on in September:—

"Orders had to be given to a battalion holding an advanced position to fall back. The only way was to send a man with orders through a murderous fire. Volunteers were asked for from the Royal Irish Fusiliers. All wanted to go, but by tossing for it a selection was made at last. He was a shock-headed lad who did not look as if there was much in him, but he had grit. Ducking his head in a way that made us laugh, he rushed into the hail of shot and shell. He cleared the first hundred yards without being hit; but in the second they brought him down. He rose again and struggled on for a few minutes, was hit once more, and then staggered a bit before finally collapsing.

"Two more men of the Irish Fusiliers dashed into the fire and rushed across while the Germans were doing their best to pink them. One picked up the wounded lad and started back to the trenches, and the other, taking the despatch, ran ahead. Just as the wounded man and his mate were within a few yards of our trenches and we were cheering them, there came another hail of bullets, and both went down dead. Meanwhile, the man with the despatch was racing for all he was worth. He got through all right till the last lap, when he was brought down. He was seen from the other trenches, and half a dozen men ran to his aid. They were all shot; but the man with the message was now crawling towards the battalion in danger. With assistance he reached them and the object was gained; they were withdrawn to a new position before the Germans succeeded in their plan of cutting them off."

By August 29th the British had fallen back to the line Compiègne—Soissons, before the German hordes. The weather generally was intensely hot, making the retreat still more trying to the Army. The situation was further complicated by the flight southwards of almost the entire population, thronging and blocking the roads. When the British fell back the inhabitants had just commenced the saving of the harvest which, undreaming of war, they had tended with solicitude and saw growing with joy. But the corn and grass were to be garnered by a dissolute and predatory foreign soldiery whose hands, in many instances, were red with the innocent blood of those who had sown

them. So, accompanied by tens of thousands of fugitives—wailing women and children for the most part, distracted by the dread and terror of this calamity which had so incomprehensibly fallen upon them—the British hastened on towards Paris.

On Tuesday, September 1st, the 4th Guards Brigade—Grenadiers, Coldstreams, and Irish—had to sustain at Villers-Cotterets the brunt of another of these fierce onslaughts which the Germans delivered against such of the British troops as attempted to stem the pursuit. The Brigade had had little rest since the commencement of the retreat with the enemy ever at their heels. Only the day before, August 31st, the Irish Guards had the longest and most trying of their forced marches. Hardy, wiry, and fleet-footed, they covered thirty-five miles with very little food, as their transport had to keep far in advance of the column to avoid capture. At a parade of the battalion on the roadside at Villers-Cotterets on the morning of September 1st, the commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Morris, addressing them on horseback, congratulated his men on their grit and vitality. He made the very interesting statement that whilst a substantial percentage of the other regiments in the Guards' Brigade had succumbed to the heat and fatigue of the march, only five men of the Irish Guards had fallen out from exhaustion.

Then all of a sudden, as the tale is told by Private Stephen Shaughnessy of Tuam, the men got orders to "Fix bayonets." The news was brought that the Germans were approaching under cover of the woods which abound in this part of France. Colonel Morris rode through the ranks, shouting, "Irish Guards, form up! Remember you are Irishmen!" The Irish Guards entered one of the woods and almost immediately caught sight of the Germans. Both sides blazed away at one another with the rifle, through the trees and undergrowth, and frequently came into grips

at the point of the bayonet. Sergeant Patrick Joseph Bennett, in a letter to his sister at Thurles, gives another instance of the unruffled mood and quiet confidence of the men during the three hours of fighting in the wood. "The Irish boys," he says, "were very cool when the shots were flying round us. They were calmly picking blackberries." In the end the Germans were beaten off, but at the heavy loss to the Irish of 150 of the rank and file and several of the officers. Morris was among the fallen. The last that Private Shaughnessy saw of the Colonel was on the road beside the wood giving orders, mounted on horseback and smoking a cigarette. He was the younger son of Lord Morris and Killanin, a famous Irish judge and humorist, and brother and heir-presumptive of Lord Killanin. He left a son, Michael, who was born ten days before his father left for the Front, and was just a month old when his father fell on the field of honour. Colonel Morris was of the finest type of soldier, and was long mourned by the regiment.

A good idea of the dangers and hardships of the retreat, apart from the fighting, and also the humours which relieved it, is given by a private of the 2nd Irish Rifles:—"It wasn't the fault of the Germans if we got away alive. They were after us night and day," he says. The greatest trouble of the regiment was to find their way through woods and strange country by night. "We got on like the Babes in the Wood, holding each other's hands, so as not to lose touch with each other. We dare not light a match or make a sound that would betray our presence, and when we saw lights in the distance twinkling like will-o'-the-wisps, we had to send our scouts to find out the meaning before we approached." Sometimes it was the Germans, and then the scouts did not get back, and the regiment had to dodge the enemy as best they could. "Once when they were looking for us their

searchlight played in the open just where we were, only we were in the shade, and if we had moved another inch our shadows would have been seen. We heard them talking and shouting to each other, but they gave no chase, thinking we had got away in another direction. We had no food for hours, except such fruit as we could pick up on the way." Does it not read as if the pursuers and the pursued were playing some monstrous game of hide-and-seek?

By September 3rd the Marne was crossed, and the long retreat of the British was brought to an end without any grave disaster. French had out-generalled and out-marched Von Kluck. But the Germans were also over the river by the 5th and practically at the gates of Paris. The British Army then fell back upon the Seine. So black did the prospect appear that the French Government and Legislature thought it prudent to remove from Paris to Bordeaux.

CHAPTER II

BATTLE OF THE RIVERS

RALLY OF THE IRISH GUARDS TO THE GREEN FLAG

THE British Expeditionary Force was driven through Northern France before a mighty and irresistible wind of steel and lead, but the tempest did not overtake and disperse them, as it might have done—such was its roaring fury—any less disciplined and stubborn troops. At the end of it all the British were weary from want of sleep and plenty of hard fighting, but not badly shaken, and certainly with spirits undaunted. So marvellously quick did they recover that on September 7th, within a few days of the end of the retreat, they had the great joy of joining with the French in turning upon the Germans and rolling them from the gates of Paris back over the rivers Marne and Aisne.

The Battle of the Rivers consisted of a series of almost continuous engagements, lasting till the end of September, principally with strong rearguards of the enemy who were holding the fords and bridges of the Marne and Aisne, and their tributaries, the Grand Morin and the Petit Morin, and the villages, farmlands and orchards of the intervening countryside. Between the different British regiments there was an emulation to outshine each other. It was a splendid vanity, for everything done to realise it tended to the confusion of the common enemy. This phase of the

war was therefore crowded with incidents showing the bravery of the soldiers of all the nationalities within the United Kingdom. From the Irish point of view the most remarkably dramatic was the rallying of the Irish Guards round the green flag.

"It is only a square piece of cloth, but its colour is green, and on it is the Harp of Ireland and inscribed in a wreath are the words: 'Eire go brath,' once bright and clear, but now faded and obliterated almost beyond recognition. That is the flag the Irish Guards obtained when they received information that they were for the Front, and from the moment they set foot on foreign soil that treasured emblem of Irish nationality has been displayed at the head of the battalion, the pride and admiration of the regiment."

So writes Corporal Michael O'Mara of the Irish Guards. The first occasion upon which the flag was produced was when the Marne was crossed, and on September 9th the Irish Guards had to advance for miles across rather open country, swept by shot and shell, to dislodge the Germans from a commanding position south of the Aisne.

The Irish as soldiers have two qualities which, though widely different in nature, are really each the concomitant of the other. The first is imperturbability, springing from indifference to danger, of which the Retreat from Mons supplied some choice examples, as I have recorded. This attribute is displayed while they are waiting for the shock of an advancing attack, or for the command to launch themselves upon a foe shooting at them from behind entrenchments. The clash comes or the order to charge is given; and then it is that, showing the other quality, they give vent to the fire and force of their passionate temperament, which, as often as not, impels them to attempt strokes more daring and rash than the occasion quite demands.

In the course of the advance between the Marne and

the Aisne on September 9th the changeful fortunes of the conflict seemed to make the final issue doubtful. The line of the advance of the Irish Guards was a hill upon which the Germans were strongly posted with several machine-guns, each pouring forth a terrible stream of 600 bullets a minute. Men were dropping on all sides. Then it was that the towering form of an Irish Guardsman was seen running well on in front of the first line flourishing the green flag, which he had tied round the barrel of his rifle, and shouting "Ireland for Ever." The men roared at the sight. On they swept, with redoubled speed, after the darling flag, in one of their furious, overmastering Irish charges, made all the more terrible by their vengeful yells. A thunderstorm was raging at the time. The gleam on their bayonets may have been the flash of the lightning, but it was more suggestive of a glint of the flame of love of country that glowed in their eyes. "It was all over in ten minutes," writes Private H. P. Mulloney to his sweetheart in Ireland. "They absolutely stood dumfounded, with white faces and knees trembling. I shouldn't like to stand in front of that charge myself. Our men were drenched to the skin, but we didn't care; it only made us twice as wild. Such dare-devil pluck I was glad to see. 'Back for those guns,' roared an officer, 'or I'll have every one of you slaughtered.' The men didn't want telling twice. We proceeded to line up the prisoners and collect the spoils, which amounted to about 150 prisoners, six Maxim guns, and 38,000 rounds of ammunition." Even in these rude passages we find expressed the rapture of the Irish Guardsmen with the tumult and the passion of the fight.

The hill was surmounted and the machine-guns taken. Afterwards the advance was continued for five miles, over a country covered with dead Germans and horses, and blazing homesteads. The Irish

rested for a time in a field, and then pushed on again until they reached the banks of the Marne. They captured 600 Germans, including many officers and eight machine-guns. But if the advance was swift, sure, and triumphant a bitter price had to be paid for it, as is the way of war, for many a fine and stalwart Irish youth found his grave between the rivers.

The man who produced the green flag was Corporal J. J. Cunningham from Dublin. He bought it in London before the Irish Guards left for the Front. It became a prized possession of the regiment. "You may be surprised to hear that the Irish flag I bought from the pedlar before parting with you I have still got," Cunningham, who was made a sergeant, says in a letter to a friend in London. "It has been carried through all our engagements, and with God's help I will carry it back to England. Clay from the trenches has made the harp on it very dirty, but, thank God, that is the only disgrace it has suffered. I did not think when we were buying it that it would go through so much." I am told, indeed, that in a far later stage of the war, at another critical moment, it was flourished by the Earl of Cavan, an Irishman, then in command of the Guards' Brigade, to egg on the Irish to an enterprise before which other units had excusably quailed. He knew of the episode between the Marne and the Aisne. He had probably heard also a story of the American Civil War. An Irish regiment on the side of the North carried a green flag bearing a harp in the glow of a sunburst, and so noted were they for their wild and reckless daring that a Confederate general, seeing the dreaded colour surging forwards, and borne proudly aloft through the battle smoke and the hail of bullets, cried out to his men, "Steady, boys, steady. Here's that infernal green flag again." The Germans, on the day that Lord Cavan waved the improvised flag of the Irish

Guards had reason also to curse it if they but knew—for the loss of valuable trenches.

On September 13th the main forces of the Germans retired to the high ground two miles north of the Aisne and entrenched themselves. As the British also dug themselves in, this was the beginning of trench warfare. But the combatants did not settle themselves down to it entirely for some months afterwards. There were still surprise attacks and counter-strokes, in which cavalry took a part, as is seen from an adventure of the 2nd Irish Fusiliers as told by Lance-Corporal Casement. "One night," he says, "after a very hard day in the trenches, when we were wet to the skin, and had lighted fires to dry our tunics, we heard firing along our front, and then the Germans came down on us like madmen. We had to tackle them in our shirt-sleeves. It was mainly bayonet work, and hard work at that. They were well supported by cavalry, who tried to ride us down in the dark, but we held our ground until reinforcements came up, and then we drove the enemy off with a fine rush of our horsemen and footmen combined."

One of the most inspiring of the deeds of self-sacrifice which the war has produced was done by an Irish soldier. In the churchyard of a village near the Aisne is the grave of a private of the Royal Irish Regiment marked by a cross without a name, but with the arresting inscription—"He saved others; himself he could not save." The story of how this unknown hero gave his life to save others was told by a wounded corporal of the West Yorkshire Regiment in an hospital at Woolwich. On September 14th, in the concluding stage of the struggle for the Aisne, the battalion was sent ahead to occupy a little village near Rheims. "We went on through the long, narrow street," says the narrator, "and just as we were in

sight of the end of it a man in khaki, to our great surprise, dashed out from a farmhouse on our right and ran towards us shouting a warning. Immediately we heard the crackle of rifles in front, and the poor chap fell dead before he reached us." The West Yorkshires ran to cover, and ultimately drove the Germans out of the houses they occupied at the outskirts of the village. Then they discovered that an ambush had been prepared into which they would have moved to their doom but for the warning given by the man in khaki at the cost of his life. He was a private of the Royal Irish Regiment—2nd battalion—who was taken prisoner the day before and confined in the farmhouse, but his identification disc had been removed by the Germans, and there was no means of discovering his name. "We buried him with military honours," concludes the narrator; "and there was not a dry eye among us as we laid him to rest."

At this early period of the war, while the cavalry—not yet transformed into infantry by the adoption of trench warfare—were still being used as horsemen, Irish troopers were distinguishing themselves. I have noticed in the newspapers, from time to time, disputes as to which unit of the auxiliary forces was the first to come under fire. The honour had been claimed by the London Scottish, who entered the field at Neuve Eglise in the first days of November, and allowed until it was established that the Northumberland Yeomanry had been in action before the London Scottish left home. But the Northumberland Hussars have in turn to yield to the South Irish Horse. This section of the Irish Yeomanry went to France early in August, 1914. They were attached to the Guards' Brigade, and were with the Irish and Coldstreams when they turned in the little town of Landrecies to hold back the Germans on August 25th, the second

day of the retreat from Mons. The North Irish Horse arrived in France on August 20th, and pushing forward at once reached the French and Belgian frontier in time to relieve the pressure on the retreating forces. They had their baptism of fire near Compiègne on September 1st, and fought again a few days later at Le Cateau. These little side details or footnotes of history are not without their interest. Often, indeed, they excite the mind even more than the big, decisive events.

During the Battles of the Marne and the Aisne both the North and the South Irish Horse were employed rounding up parties of Uhlans in the woods, and scouring the isolated villages and deserted farmhouses for stragglers. The Uhlans, by all accounts, were contemptible as foes. "They run like scalded cats when they see you," writes Captain N. G. Stewart Richardson, of the North Irish Horse, to a friend in Belfast, "and are always in close formation as if afraid to separate. I had a grand hunt after twenty (there were five of us), and we got four dead, picking up two more afterwards. We came on them round the corner of a street, and they went like hunted deer."

The duties were discharged with varying good luck and bad. Corporal Fred Lindsay tells how the North Irish Horse discovered one of those minor tragedies of war and lost Troopers Jack Scott of Londonderry and W. Moore of Limavady. "With a Sergeant Hicks they were sent to patrol as far as a ford in the river which, unknown to us, was held by a German force with a machine gun. When the three reached the ford they found a British officer dead across his motor-car and some of his men dead around the car. They were about to dismount to investigate when the machine-gun fired upon them, instantly killing the

two troopers. Sergeant Hicks escaped on Moore's horse, his own being shot under him." On another day, the same troop came upon a force of Uhlans in a wood near a village, and succeeded in killing some, taking a good many prisoners, and capturing a number of horses. "In this action," Corporal Fred Lindsay relates, "Trooper M'Clennaghan, of Garvagh, accounted for three Uhlans and took two horses single-handed; and two others and myself, firing simultaneously at an escaping Uhlan, brought both horse and rider down at 900 yards' distance. Sitting on the roadside later eating biscuits and bully beef with the rest of us Viscount Massereene complimented us, saying, 'Boys, you have done a good day's work. If we only had an opportunity like this every day!'" Subsequently the North Irish Horse had the distinction of forming the bodyguard of Sir John French. The South Irish Horse took service, like the cavalry, in the trenches.

There is also to be told a story of a clever ambush and capture of a long scattered line of German transport wagons loaded with food by a party of the 5th (Royal Irish) Lancers after the Battle of the Marne. Commanding a bridge over a stream, by which the convoy had to pass, was a coppice in which the Lancers were able to conceal themselves and the horses. They waited until the head of the column was straggling across the bridge, and then they emptied their carbines into them along a wide front that gave the impression of a great force being engaged in the attack.

One who was there thus describes what followed:—

"The Germans were taken completely by surprise. Their horses started to rear and plunge, and many men and animals went over into the stream, being carried away. The motor wagons could not be stopped in time, and they crashed into

each other in hopeless confusion. Into this confused mass of frightened men and horses and wagons that had run amok the Lancers now charged from two separate points, setting up the most awful cries in English where they didn't know any other language, but as some knew a little French and others more Irish they joined in, and all that added to the confusion of the Germans, who must have fancied that the whole Allied Army had come down on them. The Lancers made short work of the escort at the head of the column, and the officer in command agreed to surrender all that was under his direct control, though he said he couldn't account for the rearguard."

CHAPTER III

CONTEST FOR THE CHANNEL COAST

IMPETUOUS DASH OF LEINSTERS AND ROYAL IRISH, AND GRIM TENACITY OF IRISH GUARDS AND RIFLES

It had become evident that the design of the Germans, then hacking their way through Belgium, was to reach Calais and Boulogne so as to cut the direct communication of the British with the Channel coast of Belgium and France. With the view of frustrating these plans, Sir John French, early in October, withdrew his forces from the orchards and woodlands by the banks of the Aisne to French Flanders, on the north-west, a mingled industrial and agricultural country. The British Commander had also hoped to be in time to outflank the right wing of the enemy, but in this he was disappointed by the fall of Antwerp, which enabled the Germans to sweep quickly round to Ostend, higher up the Belgian coast.

The British lines now ran, first from the historic French city of St. Omer in a south-easterly direction to the smaller towns of Bethune, Givenchy, and La Bassée, towards the great French manufacturing city of Lille, prominent on the landscape with its forest of tall chimneys; and, secondly, from St. Omer again north to Ypres, the ancient and beautiful capital of Flanders. Here, for months to come, many most

desperate and critical battles were to be fought, in an extraordinary tangle of railways, canals, roads, industrial villages, mills, breweries, dyeworks, machine-shops, brick-fields, lime-kilns, and intervening patches of intensive agriculture—the most densely crowded area in the world—with the ultimate result that the advance of the Germans to the Channel coast was stopped by impregnable lines of British trenches.

In these operations both the 1st and 2nd battalions of the Leinsters, the Connaught Rangers, the Irish Rifles, the Irish Fusiliers, and the Irish Regiment took part, with the 2nd battalions of the Dublins, Munsters, and Inniskillings, whose first battalions—as we shall see later—were destined for more terrible enterprises against the Turks at the Dardanelles. It is not easy to get from the official despatches the correct proportion of the main events in France and Flanders, not to speak of being able, by the impersonal generalities of these documents, rightly to estimate the worth of the services of particular battalions. My purpose, therefore, is to attempt to depict the war on the Western Front, as seen through the eyes, not of the commanders, but of the men in the ranks and the regimental officers, and in doing so I confine myself necessarily to episodes happening here and there over the far-spreading field of conflict in which Irish regiments and individual Irish soldiers distinguished themselves.

There were two tremendous and prolonged struggles for the possession of Ypres. The chief battle, that of Ypres-Armentières, lasted from October 17th to November 15th, 1914. One of the first movements of the British was to dislodge the enemy from positions they held near Lille. In these engagements national impetuosity led to the advance of two Irish battalions too far without supports, and their practical

annihilation. On October 18th the 2nd Leinster Regiment was part of a Division which chased the Germans out of the French town of Hazebrouck, about twenty-five miles north-west of Lille, and pursued them beyond Armentières, a town on the river Lys, within nine miles of Lille. The Leinsters were about a mile in advance of the main body. They pushed on to a French village called Premesque, still nearer to Lille, and there entrenched, when the Germans surrounded them. For a day and a half the Leinsters held out until they were relieved by French troops. The French Commander thanked them for saving the village, but it cost the battalion more than 500 men and officers.

At the same time another Irish battalion was engaged on a similar enterprise in the same field of operations with more disastrous results. "On October 19th," says Sir John French in his despatch on the battle of Ypres-Armentières, "the Royal Irish Regiment, under Major Daniell, stormed the village of Le Pilly, which they held and entrenched. On the 20th, however, they were cut off and surrounded, suffering heavy losses." As the possession of Le Pilly threatened their communications between La Bassée and Lille, the Germans made a determined effort to capture it. It was evident to the Royal Irish that their position was most precarious. They held on, however, and beat off a succession of attacks, hoping that assistance would come before they were completely isolated. German riflemen crept up and ensconced themselves in farm buildings on the outskirts of the village on one side; and machine-guns were brought to a little wood on the other, so that the Royal Irish were enfiladed to the left and right.

The fight was still going on when darkness fell. "All night we could hear the firing up there," writes

Gunner P. Hall, Royal Field Artillery, who was with his battery on a hill some miles from Le Pilly; "and desperate efforts were made by our tired troops to regain the ground the Royal Irish had left uncovered, but the job was too big for men so exhausted as they were." What exactly had happened was but a matter for surmise. For hours after the village had been surrounded by the Germans the crackle of rifles and the rapid volleying of the machine-guns told that the Royal Irish were yet unsubdued. Then there came an ominous silence; and in the early hours of the morning a few survivors of the battalion staggered more dead than alive into the British camp. "They got a rousing cheer, for we had given them all up as lost," says Gunner Hall. For the rest, some weeks later, a long official list of names of the Royal Irish Regiment appeared under the heading "missing." But the vast majority of them will never be found until the Day of Judgment.

The Royal Irish Regiment had ceased to exist as a fighting force. The battalion may be said to have been defeated. The enemy, no doubt, boasted of it as such. But they set thus early in the war a shining example of dash, resolution, and endurance in facing fearful odds which must have had as much moral effect as a victory to our arms.

The most terrific phase of the great battle was from October 29th to November 2nd, immediately to the south of Ypres, east and west; and the most critical hours were, as Sir John French says, on October 31st, when the Germans broke through the British lines at Gheluvelt, a village on the road leading from Ypres south-east to Menin. On November 2nd the Germans were everywhere repulsed. The Brigadier-General, Lord Cavan, commanding the 4th (Guards) Brigade, paid the following remarkable tribute to the work of the Irish Guards on that momentous occasion in a

letter to the Officer Commanding the battalion, Colonel Proby :—

"I want you to convey to every man in the battalion that I consider that the safety of the right flank of the British section depended entirely on their staunchness after the disastrous day, November 1st. Those of them that were left have made history, and I can never thank them enough for the way in which they recovered themselves, and showed to the enemy that Irish Guards must be reckoned with, however hard hit."

Lord Cavan, in a report dated November 7th, further states :—"On October 31st, November 1st and 6th, the Irish Guards lost 16 officers and 597 other ranks in disputing 200 yards of ground with superior forces." Private Stephen Shaughnessy supplies an account of the incidents of November 6th, when the Irish Guards were overwhelmed. He says :—"At this time the enemy's strength was two to one. We endeavoured to hold the enemy by machine-guns and rifle fire, until they succeeded in penetrating the French line about two or three miles on our right, and managed to come behind our rear line." Then he gives an instance of the desperate duels that were fought between the slowly retiring Irish and the hotly pressing Germans. "While retreating," he says, "Captain King-Harman was the only officer I saw alive. He was then standing up and firing with his revolver on the Germans, who were only 60 yards away. I, or anyone else in our battalion, did not see him alive afterwards." He adds :—"The only comrade I found within reasonable distance was Private Birmingham, of Clonmel, formerly of the Royal Irish Constabulary. We discussed the situation. He got over the trench to fall back to the troops reforming in our rear. As I was getting out of the trench, a rifle bullet came through my great coat, penetrated my cardigan jacket without touching my body. We formed up again, and were reinforced by the Life Guards, notwithstanding which

we were unable to regain our lost territory. When darkness came, we were brought back a mile behind the line for a rest and refreshments. The roll was called, and only 47 of the battalion answered."

The worst was over; and Sir John French indirectly, at least, extols the Irish Guards for helping to avert a disaster, by his praise of their Brigade Commander, Lord Cavan. In his despatch on the Battle of Ypres-Armentières, the Field-Marshal says:—"The First Corps Commander (Sir Douglas Haig) informs me that on many occasions Brigadier-General the Earl of Cavan, commanding the 4th Guards Brigade, was conspicuous for the skill, coolness, and courage with which he led his troops, and for the successful manner in which he dealt with many critical situations."

Another Irish regiment to obtain one of these rare and therefore much coveted recognitions by a Commander of an Army Corps was the Royal Irish Rifles, who were fighting round the village of Neuve Chapelle, to the south, from October 25th to October 27th. "During an attack on the 7th Infantry Brigade," runs an order issued by Sir H. Smith-Dorrien, the Commander of the 2nd Corps, "the enemy came to close quarters with the Royal Irish Rifles, who repulsed them with great gallantry with the bayonet. The Commander wishes to compliment the regiment on its splendid feat, and directs that all battalions shall be informed of the circumstances of his high appreciation of the gallantry displayed." On October 27th the Germans gained possession of the northern part of the village, but towards evening the British had partially recovered the lost ground when fresh hostile reinforcements were brought up, and the entire village was captured by the enemy. The Germans would have made a bigger advance were it not for the gallant stand of the Irish Rifles against overwhelming odds.

A sergeant of the battalion supplies some details of the feat:—"One morning after we had had several days of awful shelling in the trenches the Germans came to attack us. They advanced into view through the rain and mist, and though they were ten times our strength we held our ground until the necessary dispositions could be made in other parts of the field to withstand their onslaught." As will be seen from many an incident in the course of this narrative the Irish fight best when it comes to the real crisis—the two antagonists engaged in close and relentless contest, man to man and bayonet to bayonet. At first it was furious smithing, gleaming thrust and parry, stab and hack, hack and stab, with the Irish in the trenches and the Germans above; and, in the end, it was the Germans running away and the Irish speeding their departure with rifle fire. "We did not think there was anything very wonderful about what we did," says the sergeant modestly, "but everyone went wild about it. One staff officer said we ought all to have two Victoria Crosses each, and we had the satisfaction of being splendidly praised by the General in Command."

"Nothing," says Napier in his "Peninsular War," "so startled the French soldiery as the wild yell with which the Irish regiments sprang to the charge." We are also told by Napier that at Barrosa and Bussaco the heroes of Marengo and Austerlitz reeled before the thunder shout of *Faugh-a-Ballagh* ("Clear the Way") raised by the Royal Irish Fusiliers and the Connaught Rangers. What is more likely is that the French gave way before the irresistible bayonet charge that swept like a flame in the thunder of that haughty battle-cry. The Great War shows that both these historic regiments maintain the ancient tradition of raising a wild, terrific yell when they dash forward, a yell which sends the creeps down the back, and impels the foe

irresistibly to turn and fly for fear of what is to follow.

The Irish Fusiliers were the first to enter Armentières (on the occasion that the Leinsters impetuously pushed forward to Premesque), and they did so shouting their old Irish slogan, *Faugh-a-Ballagh,* and enforcing it by driving the enemy from their positions behind every tree and at every turn on the road leading into the town. Private H. Dawson, a Westport boy in the 1st Connaught Rangers, tells how a company of the battalion frightened a big force of Germans out of their trenches, and out of their senses also, no doubt, by the blood-curdling yells they gave vent to as they advanced with the bayonet. It was on the night of November 4th, 1914, in the neighbourhood of Neuve Chapelle. The company was ordered to attack the German trenches, two platoons to do the fighting and the two others to follow after with shovels, to fill in the trenches, if they were taken. "At midnight," writes Private Dawson, "we moved forward with such cheers, shouts, and cries that the Germans, thinking that a whole brigade was advancing, evacuated the trenches and fled. The moon was shining, and when the Germans afterwards saw the handful of men that routed them they returned in greatly increased numbers and made a murderous onslaught on us."

They can sing, too, as they advance, these Connaught Rangers, as Private Robert McGregor of the Gordon Highlanders relates in a graphic letter to his father at Parkhead, Scotland. On December 26th, 1914, the Germans attacked the trenches in front of them at a particular point. The Gordons who held the trenches got out to meet the enemy as they came on in the open. There was a close fight with varying fortunes, but the Germans were reinforced, and as there were only about 170 of the Gordons left it seemed as if they were bound to be annihilated.

"But just at that moment," writes Private McGregor, "we heard the sound of singing, and the song was 'God Save Ireland.' It was the Connaught Rangers coming to our relief. Well, I have seen some reckless Irishmen in my time, but nothing to match the recklessness and daring of these gallant Rangers. They took the Germans on the left flank. The Germans now probably numbered about 2,000 against 800 Connaughts and 170 of us, but were they 50,000 I don't believe in my soul they could have stood before the Irish. The Connaughts simply were irresistible, and all the time they kept singing 'God Save Ireland.' One huge red-haired son of Erin having broken his rifle got possession of a German officer's sword, and everything that came in the way of this giant went down. I thought of Wallace. Four hundred and seventy Huns were killed and wounded, and we took 70 prisoners. Had it not been for the Irish I wouldn't be writing this, and when it comes to a hand-to-hand job there is nothing in the whole British Army to approach them. God save Ireland and Irishmen."

CHAPTER IV

ASPHYXIATING GAS AND LIQUID FIRE

CHARGE OF THE LIVERPOOL IRISH AT FESTUBERT; A NIGHT SURPRISE BY THE INNISKILLINGS

MANY a desperate engagement has been fought from Ypres in the north to La Bassée in the south. Neuve Chapelle, St. Eloi, St. Julien, Festubert, Givenchy, Hooge—to mention a few of them—are places that will stand for all time in history as the scenes of most bloody and tragical battles. They do not all spell British victories; but every vowel of them represents British bravery, suffering, endurance, resolution; and linked with them in enduring fame are the Dublins, Munsters, Inniskillings, Leinsters, Connaughts, Irish Fusiliers, Irish Rifles, and the Irish Regiment. An Irish battalion of another kind makes a splendid entry into the history of the war at this stage—the Liverpool Irish. They all had to face the new and most infamous methods of fighting introduced by the Germans, clouds of asphyxiating gas and sheets of liquid fire, the opening, literally, of "the mouth of hell" in warfare. But these horrors were encountered and overcome by the Irish battalions with the same valour as had previously rendered vain the more legitimate weapons and methods of the enemy.

Neuve Chapelle is a rural village, with many enclosed gardens and orchards, four miles to the north of La Bassée, and on the road between Bethune and Armentières. Fierce engagements for its possession were fought in October and November, 1914. The Germans were driven out of it on October 16th. It was retaken by them at the beginning of November; and though strongly entrenched and barricaded by the enemy it was finally captured by the British on March 11th and 12th, 1915.

The 2nd Royal Irish Rifles took part in the severe fighting around the village at the end of October, 1914, and, as I have already stated, were highly praised by Smith-Dorrien for their valiancy in holding up a big German attack. They lost heavily on that occasion, but their dead were avenged by the help the battalion gave in inflicting so serious a defeat upon the enemy as the victorious reoccupation of Neuve Chapelle. The first glimpse we got of the Royal Irish Rifles in the battle is in a letter written by an officer of a battalion which was closely co-operating with them, Captain and Adjutant E. H. Impey, of the 2nd Lincoln Regiment. "The Irish Rifles came through us," he says, referring to proceedings on March 10th, "and we cheered them lustily. Lieutenant Graham was rallying his men round him with a French newsboy's horn, giving a 'view-hallo' occasionally just as a master collects his pack."

Captain Impey states that on the next day, March 11th, the Lincolns were ordered to support the Irish Rifles, "Owing to some mistake," he says, "the Irish Rifles attacked before their time, and so got no artillery support. They lost very heavily in officers and men." It was on this day that the battalion suffered the grievous loss of their commanding officer, Lieut.-Colonel George Brenton Laurie. On the first

day Colonel Laurie seemed to have had a charmed life. "He deliberately walked up and down, giving orders and cheering the men on amid a flood of fire," says Sergeant-Major Miller of the battalion. "He seemed unconscious of the fact that a great bombardment was taking place. It was a wonderful sight to see him there, his big military figure standing out boldly in presence of his soldiers." Colonel Laurie was killed by the terrific shell fire which the Germans poured on the advancing British. "It was brutal. We were lying in a wood. The bullets were whistling over us in millions, and the screeching of the shells was terrific," says Bugler Jack Leathem in a letter to his mother at Downpatrick. "The trees were flying about like chaff and the fellows getting blown to pieces. I do not know how some of us escaped. Someone must have been praying for us. You know I am not very nervous, but I was not sorry when it was over. It was four very hard days, fighting both day and night, with no sleep and no trenches to protect us, only the ones we dug ourselves with our entrenching tools. They saved us from the bullets, but it was impossible to get out of shell-fire."

"You would hardly credit it," adds Bugler Leathem, "but every time we lay down to take cover out came our pipes and 'fags.' You would have thought we were on a manœuvre parade at home instead of in one of the fiercest of battles." This was the spirit that brought the battalion to Neuve Chapelle. About one o'clock in the afternoon of March 11th the 2nd Lincolns proceeded up the road into the village, or, as Captain Impey says, "the ruins of what was once a very pretty village," and found the Irish Rifles there before them. "We lay in support in this village," Captain Impey writes, "while the Irish Rifles fought the enemy in front. A company

was sent in close support just behind them along a hedge."

One of the most interesting documents relating to the Irish regiments in the war is a letter written by Father Francis Gleeson, chaplain of the 2nd Munster Fusiliers. In it he states that each of the four companies of the 2nd Munsters carries a green flag with a golden harp in the corner, the Royal Tiger in the centre, and "Munster" inscribed underneath. "The Irish flags are being highly honoured," he says. "The French people are awfully kind to and fond of the Munsters, because they are so Irish and Catholic. It is really true to say that in us, the 'Munsters,' they recognise the children of the men who fought for them at Fontenoy and Landen. They know that we are old, old friends, indeed. Their histories tell of Ireland's brave sons having died for their country here." Moved by these memories of the Irish Catholic Brigade in the service of France from the fall of the Stuarts in England until the fall of the Bourbons in France—and regularly recruited for a hundred years from Ireland—the French people recognise the distinct and separate nationality of the Irish regiments. "We are 'Les Irlandais,' and not 'Les Anglais,'" says Father Gleeson. "Our flags have done that." "The French priests are very fond of us," he goes on to relate, "and give us the use of their beautiful chapels. The people wept after the Munsters the other day when we left a village where we were billeted for a rest." He proudly adds, "On all sides the Munsters are being congratulated for their magnificent behaviour. This is due to the men's faith! They are the best conducted battalion of all the Armies engaged in this world-war, because they are the most Irish, the most Catholic, and the most pure."

The 2nd Munsters have been in the thick of the

fighting ever since the outbreak of war. Of the men who landed in France in August, 1914, there are but few survivors. The bones of many are mouldering in the soil of France and Flanders. Others are prisoners at Limburg-an-Lahn in Germany, captured in the rearguard actions during the retreat from Mons. The gaps in the ranks have been filled up by other lads from Limerick, Cork, Kerry and Clare. Always uncertain are the chances of life, but how strange and fantastic they sometimes appear! Who of these boys ever imagined in 1914 that within a year they would be serving in the British Army, much less fighting against Germany on the Continent? Fresh from the towns and villages of Munster, and new to soldiering and warfare, their racial qualities were put to the test at Rue de Bois, close to Neuve Chapelle, on Sunday, May 9th, 1915, when the Third Infantry Brigade were ordered to attack the trenches that had been held by the Germans since October. The story of the fight brings out the services of the chaplain of the battalion; and the sustaining courage which the men derive from their religious observances and their green flags, the embodiment of that ancient Irish inspiration—"Faith and Fatherland." I have compiled my narrative from the accounts written by Mrs. Victor Rickard, widow of Colonel Rickard, the officer in command of the regiment, who was killed gallantly leading his men on that memorable day; and Sergeant-Major T. J. Leahy, of Monkstown, Co. Cork, who took part in the engagement. It is worthy of note that Sergeant-Major Leahy, in an earlier letter, mentions that he served Mass for the chaplain, and was known to Father Gleeson as his "altar boy." He corroborates what Father Gleeson has written of the high moral conduct of the battalion by saying, "Prayers more than anything else console me, and every fellow is the same, so

the war has been the cause of making us almost an army of saints."

In his description of the battle, Sergeant-Major Leahy states that on the preceding day, Saturday, May 8th, close on 800 men received Holy Communion at the hands of Father Gleeson, and wrote their names and home addresses in their hymn books. When evening came the regiment moved up to take their places in the trenches in front of Rue de Bois. "At the entrance to Rue de Bois," writes Mrs. Rickard, "there stands a broken shrine, and within the shrine a crucifix. When the Munsters came up the road, Major Rickard halted the battalion. The men were ranged in three sides of a square, their green flags—a gift from Lady Gordon—placed before each company. Father Gleeson mounted, Colonel Rickard and Captain Filgate, the Adjutant, on their chargers, were in the centre, and in that wonderful twilight Father Gleeson gave a General Absolution." Sergeant-Major Leahy supplies other particulars of that moving scene. "On the lonely, dark roadside," he says, "lit up now and then by flashes from our own or German flares, rose to heaven the voices of 800 men, singing that glorious hymn, 'Hail, Queen of Heaven.' There were no ribald jests or courage buoyed up with alcohol; none of the fanciful pictures which imagination conjures up of soldiers going to a desperate charge. No, there were brave hearts without fear; only hoping that God would bring them through, and if the end—well, only a little shortened of the allotted span. Every man had his rosary out, reciting the prayers, in response to Father Gleeson, just as if at the Confraternity at home, instead of having to face death in a thousand hideous forms the following morning." He mentions also that after the religious service Father Gleeson went down the ranks, saying words of comfort; bidding good-bye to the officers, and

telling the men to keep up the honour of the regiment.

At dawn the German position was bombarded for seven minutes in order to cut gaps in the barbed-wire entanglements through which the Munsters might pass to the enemy's trenches. Then, as Sergeant-Major Leahy relates, the order was given by the officers—"Are you ready, lads?" "Yes," came the response. "Then over the parapet, like one man, leaped 800 forms, the four green company flags leading." The intervening plain measured three hundred yards. It was swept by the close-range fire of the Germans, like rain from thunder-clouds. Hundreds of the Munsters fell in the charge; but "The green flag was raised on the parapet of the main German trench, and in they went," says Sergeant-Major Leahy. Mrs. Rickard states that the regiments on the left and right, being unable to get near the line where the Munsters were fighting, the position became that of a forlorn hope; and the battalion was ordered to retire. "You were the only battalion attacking to penetrate and storm the German trenches, although under a hellish fire," said the Commander of the Brigade, subsequently addressing the Munsters. "You have added another laurel to your noble deeds during the present campaign. I am proud to command such a gallant regiment." "So the Munsters came back after their day's work," writes Mrs. Rickard; "they formed up in the Rue de Bois, numbering 200 men and three officers." "It seems almost superfluous to make any further comment," she adds. Father Gleeson was in the trenches during the answering bombardment by the Germans. "It was terrible," said Private Danaher; "houses, trees, and bodies flying in the air. Still, Father Gleeson stuck to his post attending to the dying Munsters, and shells dropping all around him. Indeed,

if anyone has earned the V.C., Father Gleeson has. He is a credit to the country he hails from, and has brought luck to the Munsters since he joined them."

The Liverpool Irish leaped into fame and glory at the first chance afforded them. That was at Festubert on June 16th, 1915. The battalion, then in reserve, was rushed up to the trenches. A big surprise movement by the French was arranged for that night, and the Liverpool Irish were to create a diversion by an assault on the enemy's trenches that fronted them, so as to attract reinforcements to the spot in the hope that the lines to be attacked by the French, away to the right, might thereby be weakened. It was what used to be called "a forlorn hope" in ancient warfare, such as the storming of a breach, from which the chance of a safe return was small, but which, if it did no other good, would weaken the arm of the enemy in encountering the main onslaught.

The detachment of the Liverpool Irish selected for this desperate enterprise had an ideal leader in Captain Herbert Finegan, dashing, combative, and resolute. The son of the late Dr. J. H. Finegan, a well-known Irish physician in Liverpool, he was educated at Stonyhurst, had a brilliant career at Liverpool University, and, with his uncommon gifts of mind and tongue, seemed destined for distinction in the law courts and the House of Commons, when war broke out and diverted him to a wholly different arena of activity. He was given charge of the attack. His company was the first over the parapets. "Come on, Irish. Show them what we can do!" he cried in his impetuous way as he thrust forward his head menacingly towards the German lines. When the men were out of the trenches, a sergeant of the company

exclaimed, "It's sure death, boys, but remember we are Irish." He was immediately blown to bits. The Germans, seeing the movement, met it by scourging the advancing lines with shell fire.

Lord Wolseley has said that almost every officer who has led a storming party across the open in full view of the enemy would acknowledge that his one anxiety from first to last was, "Will my men follow me?" Captain Finegan had no misgiving of the kind. He did not need to look over his shoulder to see if his men had rallied to his cry. They pressed round him as he ran across the open, these Liverpool Irish, most of whom had never seen Ireland, and yet were as eager to maintain her reputation for valour as the Irish Guards, the Munsters, the Dublins, or the Connaught Rangers, born and reared at home. Capt. Finegan was shot dead at the edge of the German trenches. Fired by this example, the men pressed onward, and did not stop or stay even when they had done what they had set out to do. "It was a job to make them come back when we got the order to retire," said one of the officers.

The forlorn hope had unexpectedly blossomed into a victory. The Liverpool Irish took a German trench for themselves, along with helping the French to make a rapid advance which resulted in the capture of three miles of trenches of the enemy's lines. They got congratulations on their achievement from the commander, Sir Henry Rawlinson. Many of them shared the fate of their gallant leader. It was a fate that Capt. Finegan had anticipated. "I will either go home with the Victoria Cross, or stay here with a wooden one," he once remarked to Sergeant MacCabe, of his company.

At Festubert also the 2nd Inniskilling Fusiliers carried through with complete success an enterprise

notable for wild daring and stern valour. One attack on the German trenches had failed. The ground between the opposing lines was strewn with the British dead. A second attack was ordered under cover of darkness. The 2nd Inniskillings were to lead the van in the principal sector. In spite of the pitchy blackness of the night, it was certain that the German machine-guns and rifles would take heavy toll before their trenches were reached. But the Inniskillings mix brains with their bravery. So soon as night fell, about 8 p.m., they crept over the parapet, one by one, and squirmed on their stomachs towards the German lines. Slowly and painfully they crawled through a sea of mud, from dead man to dead man, lying quite still whenever a star-shell lighted up that intervening stretch of 200 yards. By this method, platoon after platoon spread itself over the corpse-strewn field, until the leading files were within a few yards of the German trenches.

Then came the hardest task of all—to lie shoulder to shoulder with the dead until at midnight a flare gave the signal, "Up and into the German trenches." But the Inniskillings held on with steady nerves through all the alarums of the night. Occasionally bullets whistled across the waste, and some who had imitated death needed to pretend no longer. But the toll was not heavy. At least it was infinitesimal by comparison with the cost of an open tumultuous charge from their own trenches. When at last the flash blazed up the leading platoons were in the German trenches before the enemy had time to lift their rifles. The Inniskillings caught the Germans in many cases actually asleep. Many of the grey-coats woke up just in time to find British bayonets at their throats. The entire force was confused and demoralised by this

sudden appearance in their trenches of khaki and the deadly bayonet, and were quickly overthrown. The Inniskillings paid less for the capture of the first and second lines of trenches than they might have done by an open attack for the first alone. They made it possible for the whole Division to sweep on and to score a victory where another Division had previously found defeat.

CHAPTER V

THE IMMORTAL STORY

LANDING OF THE DUBLINS AND MUNSTERS AT THE DARDANELLES

THE most terrific thing in the bombardment of the southern end of Gallipoli by the British Fleet, from the Ægean Sea, on Sunday morning, April 25th, 1915, was the roar of the *Queen Elizabeth*—the mammoth vessel of the Navy and armed with the mightiest guns—sending forth at each bellow and flash a ton of high explosives. It inspired awe and dread to the uttermost, that concentration of fire from all the ships of the Fleet. What living being, or work of nature or man, could survive it? Those on the ships who were searching the peninsula with the most powerful telescopes could see no sign of life. Houses and walls disappeared, and clouds of sand and earth and smoke arose where the Turks were supposed to be entrenched. There was no reply to the cannonade, not even the crack of a rifle.

The allied Fleets of England and France had failed to batter open the gates of the Dardanelles from the sea in March; and now there was to be an attempt to invade Gallipoli by making a number of separate but simultaneous landings of British troops on the

southern and western sides of the peninsula. The object was to seize the Turkish positions defending the Straits, which was to be followed, if all went well, by an advance to Constantinople by both land and sea, and the dictation of terms to the paralysed Ottoman Empire at St. Sophia. English, Scottish, Australian, New Zealand, and Indian troops, as well as Irish, were engaged in this grand enterprise. They all acquitted themselves nobly, especially the Lancashire regiments, with their very large Irish element; and the Dominion forces, in which Ireland was also well represented; but to the Irish regiments was allotted what proved to be the most desperate part of the invasion, as will be found fully admitted in the official despatches of Sir Ian Hamilton in command of the Army and Admiral de Robeck of the Navy. The British troops consisted of the 29th Division under Major-General Hunter-Weston. In it were battalions of three Irish regiments, 1st Dublin Fusiliers, 1st Munster Fusiliers, and 1st Inniskilling Fusiliers. They had been brought from India and Burma to England at the outbreak of the war, and having rested for some months in the Midlands, around Coventry, left Avonmouth for the Near East on St. Patrick's Day, 1915.

Along this western side of Gallipoli, washed by the Ægean Sea, the yellow cliffs of sandstone and clay, clothed in scrub, seem to rise, in an undeviating line, clear out of the waters to a height of from two to three hundred feet. But there are points where the line is really shoved back, as it were, and here and there, at these places, flat semicircles of sand lie between the water and the base of the cliffs. It was on half a dozen of these small beaches that the troops were to be landed under the cover of the bombardment by the Fleet. The Dublins and the Munsters were to land at "Beach V" immediately below the castle and

village of Sedd-el-Bahr, strongest of the Turkish positions.

In this particular landing very remarkable use was made of a steamer called the *River Clyde*, turned into a troopship. She had about 2,500 troops on board, all Munsters and Dublins, save two companies of the Hampshire Regiment, who formed part of the same brigade, the 86th. So closely packed were the men that they could scarcely move. The plan was to run her ashore, full steam ahead, and when she was beached the troops were to emerge through openings cut in her sides, on the lower deck, and passing down narrow gangways make a dash for the shore over a bridge to be formed of some lighters which accompanied her. The *River Clyde* was beached about 400 yards from the castle of Sedd-el-Bahr, which rose above the high ground to the right; and the bridge of lighters was also successfully run in towards the shore from the gangways jutting from the improvised doors in the port and starboard bow of the vessel.

While the preparations were in progress three companies of the Dublins were being brought ashore in open boats drawn by steam pinnaces, five or six boats in each tow, and over thirty men in every boat. No sign had yet been given that any of the enemy were about on the cliffs and hills, shrouded by the dust and smoke caused by the shells of the Fleet; and it looked almost as if the landing would be unopposed. But the enemy were there in their thousands, lying low with rifles and machine-guns. The Turks have shown on many a field of old their fine fighting qualities. They had been trained in all the newest tricks of warfare by German officers. They were animated also by two of the most powerful emotions—defence of their native land against unbelieving dogs of Christians; and the firm conviction that death in such a cause was but the opening of the gates to the

sensuous delights of Paradise. So they were biding their time, and the hour for action struck when the boats crowded with the Dublins were about twenty yards from the shore. The furious reception they gave to the landing parties was astounding, having regard to the terrific preliminary bombardment by the Fleet which had lasted several hours. The Turks were as ready for the invaders as if the explosives of the *Queen Elizabeth* had gone wide of the mark, or else as if she had contented herself with pelting the entrenchments with boiled potatoes or roasted apples.

The scene of the landing was, in configuration, like an amphitheatre with the beach as a stage. The beach itself is a strip of powdery sand about three hundred yards long and ten or twelve yards wide. Behind it is a steep rising ground of sandstone and clay grown with prickly scrub. Sir Ian Hamilton calls it a "death trap." He could not have given it an uglier nor yet a truer name. Barbed wire entanglements were cunningly concealed in the shallows of the foreshore. The Turks were posted with artillery on the heights, and had sharpshooters and also machine-guns ensconced in holes made in the face of the cliff less than a dozen yards from the sea.

When the picket-boats, or steam pinnaces, got to within two hundred yards of the shore they cast off; and the cutters, with the Dublins, continued on their way towards a narrow strip of rock jutting out from the beach, which made a natural landing-place. Then it was that the Turks concentrated upon the boats a most destructive fire of rifles, and machine-guns from the amphitheatre, and shrapnel from the fort at Sedd-el-Bahr. The attacking party was practically wiped out. Only a few passed through this tornado of lead unscathed. Colonel Rooth, of the Dublins, the

Adjutant, Captain Higginson, and the chaplain, Father Finn, were killed. Sergeant J. Colgan, who was in the boat with these officers, says:—"Only six of us got away alive out of a boat-load of thirty-two. One fellow's brains were shot into my mouth as I was shouting to them to jump for it. I dived into the sea. Then came the job to swim with my pack, and one leg useless. I managed to pull out the knife and cut the straps and swim ashore. All the time bullets were ripping around me." Here is another individual experience supplied by a private of the Dublins:—"I jumped into the sea with my gun, and made towards the shore. When I got up on the rocky place I had my first bullet in the side. I felt as if I was struck with an iron bar in the back. It knocked me down. I put up my right hand to my head with the pain, when I got a bullet through that also. I had thus two narrow escapes. The first bullet just missed my lung and spine; it made a big hole in my back. The second one just missed my head."

Extremely rare were such miraculous deliverances from death. Many of the Dublins who got safely out of the boats and attempted to swim or wade to the shore were entangled in the barbed wire and drowned. The few who reached the shore crawled on their stomachs, or ran, reeling and staggering, to the shelter of a narrow ridge of sand, about four feet high, which fortunately stretched across the beach not far from the cliff. Most of the boats were destroyed. Others, with their ghastly loads of dying and dead, drifted out to sea, where they were picked up by the Fleet. An officer of the Dublins who was in one of these boats says:—"Shrapnel burst above our heads and before I knew where I was I was covered with dead men. Not knowing they were dead, I was roaring at them to let me up, for I thought I was drowning. The guns still played on us till we got

back to a mine-sweeper. I was simply saturated all over with blood, and I could feel the hot blood all over me all the way across. When they pulled these poor fellows off me they were all dead, and the poor fellows under me were dead also. The boat was awful to look at, full of blood and water."

Meanwhile the landing of the Munsters from the *River Clyde* was about to commence. Three of the lighters were placed in position to serve as a pier from the vessel to the shore. They covered but a part of the distance. Then out of the holes cut in the sides of the steamer were thrust wooden gangways leading to the lighters.

The Munsters caught glimpses from the lower deck of the appalling scenes of tumult and slaughter attending the landing of the Dublins. They saw the boats drifting by loaded with the mangled bodies of their fellow-countrymen. They saw corpses floating on the sea. They saw the waters, as smooth as glass, turned from blue to crimson. As the Dublins set out for the shore they cannot have had any adequate conception of the withering tempest of lead that awaited them. The Munsters witnessed the whole horrid tragedy. The task before them was every whit as desperate, and fearsome, and knowledge of its nature added to its terrors. It was enough to make the blood curdle in the veins, and fear to clutch at the heart with an icy grip. Man clings to life tenaciously. Many of these hitherto gay and irresponsible young Munsters had become very serious, and their eyes had a deep, inward look as if they were pondering over some great thing. Were they sad for their shattered dreams of a safe return to Ireland; and of a peaceful home life with a girl of blue eyes, red lips, and black hair as its alluring central figure? An officer passed among them saying, "Our time has come, boys, and we must not falter. Remember we

are Munsters; and, above all, remember Ireland." The men were thrilled by this double appeal to pride in their gallant regiment and love for their dear native land. At the words their spirits mounted high. So that when it was discovered that one of the gangways had been shot away by a shell, and a delay was suggested in order to see if it could not be rigged up again, and one of the officers stepped forward, and shouted, "Volunteers for the first dash," there was an instant response, "We are ready, sir." I am told one of the Munsters made the racy reply :—"Let us at them, sir; sure it's as aisy a job as we can strike." It is the way of the Irish to make light of troubles. "There's nothing so bad but it could be worse," runs one of their sayings. They will seek to pluck contentment from the most desperate of situations.

The officer stepped through the hole on to the gangway, with the men pressing close behind him. At the moment the bullets were rattling like diabolic hailstones against the steel sides by which the hull of the vessel were strengthened. What happened then is graphically described by Private Timothy Buckley, of Macroom, County Cork. Lying wounded in a military hospital in England, he said :—

"The captain of my company asked for 200 volunteers, and as I was in his company I volunteered. We got ready inside on the deck, and opened the buckles of our equipment, so that every man might have a chance of saving himself if he fell into the water. He gave the order to fix bayonets when we should get ashore. He then led the way, but fell immediately at the foot of the gangway. The next man jumped over him, and kept going until he fell on the pontoon bridge. Altogether 149 men were killed outright and 30 wounded. I was about the twenty-seventh man out. I stood counting them as they were going through. It was then I thought of peaceful Macroom, and wondered if I should ever see it again. When my turn came I was wiser than some of my comrades. The moment I stood on the gangway I jumped over the rope on to the pontoon. Two more did the same, and I was already

flat on the bridge. Those two chaps were at each side of me, but not for long, as the shrapnel was bursting all around. I was talking to the chap on my left, and saw a lump of lead enter his temple. I turned to the chap on my right. His name was Fitzgerald. He was from Cork, but soon he was over the border. The one piece of shrapnel had done the job for the two."

Thus men in khaki poured out of the side of the *River Clyde* and raced down the gangway or jumped from it at once on to the first lighter. Two men out of every three fell. The commanding officer of the Munsters, Colonel Monck-Mason, was wounded and put out of action early in the proceedings. Soon the first and second lighters were piled high with wounded and dead, twisted into all sorts of horrid shapes, and the men who escaped being instantly shot were to be seen stepping and jumping and even walking over the bodies of their fallen comrades. Many of these flung up their arms, spun round, and, with a cry of agony, went splash into the sea never to rise again. Then the horrors of the situation were added to by a most unfortunate mishap. The lighter nearest to the beach gave way in the current and drifted backward into deep water. The men in it jumped out in the hope of being able to swim and wade to the shore. Most of them were drowned by the weight of their equipment. But the Munsters never quailed. All the time they continued emerging from the *River Clyde*, in an unbroken stream, two men out of every three still dropping on the gangway or on the bridge, and the survivors still pressing forward with their faces dauntlessly set for the land. Those who got to the shore rushed to join the Dublins under the scanty cover afforded by the low sandy escarpment. The first of the Munsters to gain the beach was Sergeant Patrick Ryan. He swam ashore in his full kit; and got the Distinguished Conduct Medal for "showing

under heavy fire the greatest coolness and powers of leadership."

Mr. H. W. Nivenson, one of the newspaper correspondents with the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, mentioned in a lecture on the operations which he delivered in London, that he and others saw the landing through their glasses from a ship some miles out at sea. One of the party, seeing the men who had landed dropping on the beach, and not understanding the tragic nature of the scene, remarked to Mr. Nivenson: "Why are our men resting?" The beach was, in fact, strewn with maimed men, or men on whose sufferings the oblivion of death had mercifully fallen. Pinnaces which had towed the boats of the Dublins hung about picking up the dead and wounded from the sea, and members of their crews heroically landed on the beach to carry off the disabled living. Officers and bluejackets suffered death while engaged on this work of mercy. Consequently most of the wounded could only be removed when it was dark. They lay on the beach all day, in the hot sand under the broiling sun, in agonies of pain and thirst, till nine o'clock at night. Surgeon Barrett, of the Royal Navy, a Cork man, who was on the *River Clyde*, says:—"I had some of the wounded back on board—chaps whom I had seen half an hour before well and strong—now wrecks for life. It was awful. They were very cheery and dying to be back again at the Turks. It was very strange. I would see a poor chap dying, and asking him where he came from, the answer would be 'Blarney Street, Cork'; another 'Main Street,' and one poor sergeant, who had five bayonet wounds in his stomach, came from 'Warren's Place.' He died that night, and was cheery to the last. They are fine fellows, and won the admiration of everyone." Surgeon Peter Burrows, R.N., another Irishman, though severely wounded, remained on the

River Clyde until April 27th, succouring the injured. He attended to 750 disabled men while suffering great pain himself, and being quite incapable of walking during the last twenty-four hours of his continuous duty. The Distinguished Service Order was given to Surgeon Burrows.

Altogether more than 1,000 men had left the *River Clyde* by 11 o'clock in the morning. Two-thirds of them had been shot dead, drowned, or wounded. The landing was then discontinued. It was resumed under the shelter of darkness, when, strange to say, the 1,000 men remaining on the *River Clyde* got ashore without a single casualty. In fact not a shot was fired against them. But before they were landed a night attack was made by the Turks on the remnants of the Dublins and Munsters crouching on the beach under the protection of the bank. Lieutenant Henry Desmond O'Hara, of the Dublins, took command, all the senior officers having been killed and wounded. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and promoted to be captain for his initiative and resource in restoring the line when it had been broken by the Turks, and organising a successful counter-attack which caused great loss to the enemy. Captain O'Hara died soon afterwards of wounds received in action. He was the only son of Mr. W. J. O'Hara, resident magistrate, Ballincollig, Co. Cork, and a nephew of Dr. O'Hara, Bishop of Cashel.

In the morning an assault was made upon the fort and village on the heights. The Dublins advanced, with the Munsters on their right and the Hampshires on their left. Through the prickly scrub or brushwood of the hill ran three lines of trenches and a network of entanglements made of barbed wire of an unusually strong and vicious kind. Out of these entrenchments the machine-guns poured a devastating stream of lead. To attack such a position seemed

almost to match in madness the landing of the day before. I do not think there is any sound of battle more appalling to the soldier who has to face it than the devil's tattoo of the machine-gun sending forth its six hundred bullets by the minute. "It was up the hill and back again, up and back," writes a Kildare man in the Dublins, "till we began to wonder if the Turks would not drive us into the sea." Lord Wolseley said that one of the most difficult things for an officer to do is to induce a line of men who, during an advance under fire, have found some temporary haven or shelter, or have lain down, perhaps, to take breath, to rise up together and dash forward in a body upon the enemy's position. Here, however, there were deeds of bravery of the highest order. Corporal William Cosgrave got the V.C. for pulling down, single-handed, the posts of the high wire entanglements. In order to give encouragement to his men Sergeant C. Cooney, of the Dublins—afterwards awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal—freely exposed himself in the open, though the Turks were lying within seventy yards of him. This conspicuous contempt of danger had the effect the gallant sergeant desired. The men charged with a daring and fury that swept the Turks out of the trenches, at the point of the bayonet, and had them back in the village by 10 o'clock. In the streets the Irish were held in check for hours and suffered more heavy losses from the fire of the Turks strongly posted and concealed in the ruins of the houses. But at noon the final rush was made, and the Munsters and Dublins stood triumphant within the captured fort. Most of the Turks had retired during the last stages of the attack; but in the fort were captured 200 of the enemy with several machine-guns. The first man to enter the fort was a Dublin Fusilier, Private T. Cullen, who got the Distinguished Conduct Medal for conspicuous gallantry.

The landing at "Beach V," Gallipoli, is one of the most terrible and heroic episodes to be found in the annals of the British Army. The Turks and the Germans were amazed at its audacity and mad recklessness. By all the rules of war it was doomed to disastrous failure. Von der Goltz, the German General, who designed the defences, boasted that the landing was impossible. It succeeded because of the unconquerable bravery, determination, and self-sacrifice of the troops. Yet the part taken by the Irish regiments is meanly ignored altogether by Admiral de Robeck, and but scantily recorded by Sir Ian Hamilton. Ten lines to the Dublins; less than twenty to the Munsters! How inadequate and bald the account of the General appears in the light of the full immortal story! But tributes to the magnificent bravery of the Irish have been paid by others. Major-General Hunter-Weston, commanding the 29th Division, made a stirring speech to the 1st Dublin Fusiliers on their relief from the firing line after fifteen days of continuous fighting. "Well done, Blue Caps!" he cried. The Dublins are known as "Blue Caps." During the Indian Mutiny a despatch of Nana Sahib was intercepted in which he referred to those "blue-capped English soldiers that fought like devils." These were the predecessors of the Dublins.

"Well done, Blue Caps!" said General Hunter-Weston, "I now take the first opportunity of thanking you for the good work you have done. You have achieved the impossible. You have done a thing which will live in history. When I first visited this place with other people of importance, we all thought a landing would never be made, but you did it, and therefore the impossibilities were overcome—and it was done by men of real and true British fighting blood. You captured the fort and village on the right

that were simply swarmed with Turks with machine-guns, also the hill on the left, where the pom-poms were. Also the amphitheatre in front, which was dug line for line with trenches, and from where there came a terrific rifle and machine-gun fire. You are indeed deserving of the highest praise. I am proud to be in command of such a distinguished regiment, and I only hope, when you return to the firing line after this rest (which you have well earned), that you will make even a greater name for yourselves. Well done, the Dubs! Your deeds will live in history for time immortal. Farewell."

Brigadier-General W. B. Marshal, of the 29th Division, writing in November, 1915, to his friend Mr. James O'Regan, Grand Parade, Cork, says:—"I am now one of the very few survivors of those who landed with the 29th Division on April 25th, 1915. Nearly all the rest have been killed, wounded, or invalided, so that I may count myself very lucky after eight months of strenuous work, I should be glad of a change." He adds some very striking passages:—"Though I am an Englishman, I must say the Irish soldiers have fought magnificently. They are the cream of the Army. Ireland may well be proud of her sons. Ireland has done her duty nobly. Irishmen are absolutely indispensable for our final triumph. If I am spared to return at the end of the war I shall make my future home in 'Dear Old Ireland,' which has always had a warm corner in my heart, for in no part of the world have I met more generous, warm-hearted, or braver people than in the Emerald Isle." Trooper Brennan, of the Australian Light Horse, writing from Anzac to his father in Kilkenny, says he received an account of the Landing of the Dublins and Munsters from men of the Royal Scots; and goes on to make this comment:—"Somehow, it's a funny thing how nearly every account of an Irish regiment's

prowess comes from a Scotchman—I remember it was a Highlander who told of the Munsters at Mons. At any rate, I tried to get some particulars from a few of the Dublins and Munsters themselves, and I failed miserably. They were all talking of poor Johnny this and that who got shot, or Paddy something-or-other, or the bad water, or the failure of the rum issue, so I came to the conclusion that an Irishman's fighting is somewhat like his temper or dislikes—no sooner dispensed with than forgotten."

Here, sure enough, is a Scot who was at Gallipoli, and saw the landing, writing in glowing terms of the Irish in a letter published in January, 1916, by *The Tablet*, who took it from a Scottish paper:—

"I am astonished that Glasgow folks—and I have met quite a number since my return from that 'heli' out there—seem to be unaware of the extraordinary bravery which was displayed by the Irish soldiers, especially the Munsters and the Dublins. As you know, I am not Irish, and have no Irish connections whatever—in fact, I was rather opposed to the granting of Home Rule; but now, speaking honestly and calmly, after having witnessed what I did—the unparalleled heroism of these Irishmen—I say nothing is too good to give the country of which they are, or rather were, such worthy representatives.

"My God, it was grand! It filled one with admiration and envy; because certainly no soldiers could show greater daring and bravery than these fine boys did in face of an awful fire and destruction. Aye, the race that can produce such men, supermen, as those chaps were, to do such glorious work for the Empire has the most perfect right to demand and, what is more, to get the freedom of its country and the right to rule it. Yes, it is but the merest truth to state that there would be no Dardanelles campaign heard of to-day if it had not been for the extraordinary services of these Irish troops, white men every one, and I have no doubt but that God has taken them to Himself."

The Scottish soldier then goes on to bear remarkable testimony to the deep religious fervour of the Irish troops:—

"Oh, but they deserve a rich reward! What surprises me is that the papers have not been full of their praises. I would have expected that it would have been made widely known that the Irish boys had at least saved the situation and displayed a bravery the like of which was never equalled. It is a shame and a scandal, because I can tell you there is not a man in the Service who is aware of the great gallantry but who would willingly do anything now for the Irish people—yes, the Irish Catholics. I have no religion, but it was most charming and edifying to see these fine chaps with their beads and the way in which they prayed to God. We are all brothers, but to my dying day I bow to the Irish."

Many an Irish home was made desolate. Ireland mourned for her young men; but there is an uplifting sorrow, the sorrow that is mingled with pride, and of that kind was the sorrow of Ireland.

CHAPTER VI

THE 10TH IRISH DIVISION IN GALLIPOLI

LANDING AT SUVLA BAY, AND CAPTURE OF CHOCOLATE HILL

At the dawn of Saturday morning, August 7th, 1915, the Ægean Sea and the Gulf of Saros, to the north-west of Gallipoli, were swarming with the most variegated collection of shipping, of all sorts and conditions—transports, cruisers, torpedo-boat destroyers, trawlers, barges, ocean liners, steam pinnaces, rowing boats, and tramp steamers. A fresh landing, at Suvla Bay, had been in progress all through the night. The first great landing, on April 25th, at Sedd-el-Bahr, at the toe of the Peninsula—in which the first battalions of the Dublin and Munster Fusiliers won imperishable renown—had secured a foothold in Gallipoli, but the hills and forts which guarded the passage up the Dardanelles to Constantinople, on the east, were still held by the Turks. Now a new and stupendous effort was about to be made to break the enemy's grip on the Peninsula.

The date, August 7th, 1915, should be ever memorable in the history of Ireland, and also in that of the

whole United Kingdom. On that day a Division of the New Armies raised for the war—"Kitchener's Armies," as they are popularly called—was brought under fire for the first time, and collectively engaged in battle. These citizen soldiers were Irish. Irish professional soldiers have always fought most gallantly for England in all her wars. But on that day, for the first time in the long and embittered relations between England and Ireland, a distinctively Irish Division (the 10th), voluntarily raised in Ireland and composed of 20,000 young men of fine character and high purpose, representative particularly of the Nationalist and Catholic sections of the community, were found on the side of England.

The 10th Irish Division was formed in the autumn and winter months of 1914. They left Ireland at the end of April, 1915, to complete their training in the great camp of Aldershot. At the end of June they embarked from England as part of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force. On Friday evening, August 6th, they parted from the olive groves and vineyards of beautiful islands in the Ægean, off the coast of Asia Minor, where they had been stationed a couple of weeks, and were brought up to Gallipoli. Here, then, were clerks from offices and counting houses, assistants from drapery and grocery shops, civil servants, public school boys, artisans, labourers, farm hands—a heterogeneous collection of youths from all walks in life—and officered chiefly by barristers, solicitors, engineers, and University students, who had only been a few months in training, and who before this call to arms suddenly rang through the Empire, seemed destined for peaceful and secure careers in civil life. Now, within a few hours of hearing, for the first time in their lives, a shot fired in anger, they were to be

plunged right into the fiery and bloody whirlpool of war.

Gallipoli, as it looked from the decks of the troop-ships, even in the wonderful dawn of that August Saturday morning, had a mysterious and sinister appearance. The men saw yellow clayey cliffs, rising almost sheer from intensely blue water, and beyond these a huddle of pointed and desolate hills, to which no access seemed visible. To their right they could see Achi Baba—a head and shoulders, with two arms extending on each side to the sea—dominating the end of the Peninsula, like a Chinese idol, inscrutable, and disdainful of the shells from the battleships which raised clouds of smoke and dust about its face. The general objective of all the troops engaged in this new enterprise—English, Scotch, and Welsh Territorials, as well as the Irish Division of the new Armies—was the capture of the Anafarta Hills, a network of ravines and jungles to the north of the high mountain of Sari Bair, the key of the situation in this upper part of the Peninsula. The Australians, New Zealanders, and Maoris had been attacking Sari Bair since dark on Friday night, from their position at Anzac, lower down the Peninsula.

The 10th Division was wholly Irish, save for one English battalion, the 10th Hampshire Regiment. The 29th Brigade, composed of the 5th Connaught Rangers, 6th Leinsters, 6th Irish Rifles, and the 10th Hampshires, was detached from the Division, and landed at Anzac, to co-operate with the Dominion Forces. But the other two Brigades were entirely Irish. These were the 30th, consisting of the 6th and 7th Dublin Fusiliers, 6th and 7th Munster Fusiliers; and the 31st, consisting of the 5th and 6th Inniskilling Fusiliers, and the 5th and 6th Irish Fusiliers. In addition, there was the Pioneer Regi-

ment, the 5th Royal Irish Regiment (Colonel, the Earl of Granard, K.P.), the purpose of which was to facilitate the progress of the troops by removing obstructions, but which also took part in the fighting. These two Brigades had orders to clear the Turks out of the heights of Karakol Dagh, a long ridge fronting the Gulf of Saros, to the north; and to take a particular hill a few miles to the south, about three or four miles inland from Suvla Bay. This hill is known to the Turks as Yilghin Burnu. It was called Chocolate Hill by the invading army as part of its surface had been burnt a dull brown by shell fire. The Division was under the command of General Sir Bryan Mahon, a Galway man, who saw much service in Egypt and the Soudan, and in the South African War led the column which relieved Mafeking.

In a way, it is a pity that things were not so arranged as to have brought these unseasoned and unhardened Irish troops gradually to the great and searching test of war, that they were not afforded the opportunity of feeling the land of the foe under their feet, and becoming somewhat familiar with its extraordinary geographical conditions and climate, before they had to rush into battle. In warfare all that depends, usually, upon unforeseen circumstances, and the chance disposition of the forces. But it may have happened by special direction in this case; and, if so, it was a compliment to the 10th Division. "It is true they are new and untried, but they are Irish," it was probably said at Headquarters, "and being Irish, they may be relied upon, however hard and tough their job." In any case, both Brigades were successful in the enterprises to which they were set.

The disembarkation was carried out under fire from the Turkish batteries on the hills. The men were

taken from the transports in steam-driven barges, and though the barges had sheltering sides of steel, several men were killed and wounded by exploding shells even before they reached the shore. Half of the 30th Brigade, consisting of the two battalions of the Munsters, to whom was allotted the task of capturing Karakol Dagh, were landed to the north of Suvla Bay, just under the ridge. "How I wish that their fathers and mothers could know more of how these brave fellows fought and died!" writes the Commanding Officer of one of the Munster battalions in a letter to his relatives. "They, alas! for the most part just see the names of their dear ones in a casualty list, and can learn nothing further. The beach on which we landed was sown with contact mines, and as we crossed it to form up under cover of a small hill, many a poor chap was blown to bits —not very encouraging for those approaching in other boats. But they never wavered, but landed, and formed up as quietly and steadily as they used to do on the parade ground at the Curragh. I asked one poor chap who was slightly injured how he had got through, and he said, 'All I could think of, sir, was how anxious you must be to see how we would behave.' That is the spirit that one likes to see in a battalion."

The landing place of the other half of the 30th Brigade, the 6th and 7th Dublins, with the Inniskillings and the Irish Fusiliers, was to the south of Suvla Bay, at Niebruniessi Point, under the hill, Lala Baba. The men climbed the cliffs to the sand dunes. Leaving their packs behind them, they carried nothing but what was absolutely necessary— a rifle and 200 rounds of ammunition per man, a water bottle, and rations for two days in a bag, consisting of two tins of bully beef, tea, sugar, biscuits, and tablets of compressed meat. Thus equipped, with

loosened girths and wearing their big brown sun-helmets, the troops advanced in eight or ten long lines, with two paces between each man. The 7th Dublins, the famous "Pals," flower of the youth of Dublin, were in the van. Colonel Geoffrey Downing, in command of the 7th Dublins, as the senior colonel of the battalions in the attacking line, got a message from Headquarters that it was imperative that Chocolate Hill should be taken before sunset. His reply was: "It shall be done."

As the crow flies Chocolate Hill is no more than four miles from the sea line. But to reach it the Irish troops had to make a wide enveloping movement, so that the ground actually covered in the advance was from ten to twelve miles. To the north of the point where the landing took place is a long and broad but shallow lagoon, called Salt Lake. The intense summer heat had dried it up and turned its bottom into a flat stretch of sand and dust, covered with a slight crust of salt which glistened in the sun. The Irish troops first proceeded a considerable distance ahead between the sea and Salt Lake, moving thereby parallel to Chocolate Hill, which lies east of the lake. At one point they had to pass over a long spit of sand, not twenty yards wide, that divided the sea and Salt Lake. The enemy had its exact range. Many a man was brought down as he attempted to cross it at a run. Then Colonel Downing, of the 7th Dublins, came upon the scene. He paused, lit a cigarette, and walked over the narrow ridge as coolly as if he were doing Grafton Street, Dublin. After this experience the troops wheeled to the right, and marching south-east across Salt Lake faced the rear flank of their objective.

Crossing Salt Lake in the open, they presented a clear target to the enemy, and were raked with

machine-gun fire, shrapnel and high-explosive shells. It is an ordeal that strains to the uttermost all the physical and mental qualities. One of the most common experiences of men who go through it for the first time is a distracting indecision whether to advance, halt, or retreat. But the successive lines went steadily on in short rushes, the men falling on their stomachs between each rush. There was no shelter. The expanse was unbroken even by a rock. The men sank almost to their knees in the soft sand. Very heavy, slow and tiring was the going. All the time Turkish explosives were bursting on every side, and comrades were dropping out of the ranks killed or disabled. One instance will show the steadiness and resolution of the troops. A shell burst in the middle of a platoon that was marching in rather close formation. Five men were blown to pieces. The platoon opened out and continued their advance. High over their heads the shells from the British cruisers and monitors out at sea went shrieking on their way to find the Turks. The land seemed to tremble with the din and vibration caused by this long-range artillery duel. The men were bodily shaken. But they were also greatly heartened to see, now and then, clouds of earth thrown into the air, telling how the explosive shells from the ships were rending the entrenchments behind which the enemy lay concealed.

After this ordeal in the open sandy plain, the Irish reached a totally different kind of country—an inextricable jumble of hills and gullies, strewn with boulders, overgrown with a thick prickly scrub, and wholly trackless. Here some shelter was afforded from the high explosives of the Turks, but not from their machine-guns and rifles, and the progress was still more slow and difficult. The nature of the country gave a tremendous superiority to the enemy, on

the defensive behind their entrenchments. What a hopeless, heart-breaking task it seemed to get free of this entanglement of rocks and scrub, which tore the clothes and lacerated the flesh, and force a way up these steep hills, on hands and feet to the Turkish positions. Men were falling on all sides. How soon would the end of the fiery furnace be reached? Would anyone get safely through? Such were the thoughts that occupied the mind of many a man, expecting that the next bullet or shell would strike him down. The battalions were broken up into unrelated sections, or else were mixed together. The nature of the ground, the gullies and ravines, the scrub and the rocks, split them up into fragments, each with its independent command. This kind of fighting was quite to the liking of the Irish troops. It gave play to individual personal courage and qualities of leadership.

What they all desired was to get into close grips with the Turks. How they hungered for the wild exultation of the bayonet charge, the shock of man to man in deadly encounter, the pursuit of a vanquished foe! The evening was well advanced before the end came in sight. Major Harrison gallantly led the 7th Dublins and men of other units in the final attack. "Fix bayonets, Dublins, and let's make a name for ourselves," was his cry. The hill had not only natural advantages for defence in rocks, scrub, and trees. It was also a network of trenches. From behind this double cover the Turks threw hand grenades at the Irish, now approaching with a rush and yelling fiercely. Soon they got a taste of bayonet and clubbed rifle administered by Irish hands. The Turks are brave fighters, but they quailed before the Irish onslaught and sought safety from it in precipitate flight. At half-past 7 o'clock, just as it was growing dark, Chocolate Hill was taken.

There is some dispute, I understand, between the Dublins and Inniskillings and Irish Fusiliers as to which battalion the men first in the Turkish trenches belonged. But does it really matter? Are they not all Irish? Probably men of all the battalions were in the last overwhelming rush. There is no doubt that the Dublins get most of the credit for the feat. The battalion was specially complimented by Headquarters for their heroism and endurance. And well they deserved it. What a baptism of fire it was for those inexperienced Irish lads! And what a confirmation of suffering. Over ten hours of continuous open fighting against machine-guns and artillery, and on a day of scorching heat! "We have gained a great name for the capture, and for the splendid regiment which I have the honour to command," says Colonel Downing. The General of the Division, Sir Bryan Mahon, speaking of all the battalions, said he had never seen better work by infantry. The fact that the hill was widely known afterwards among the troops in Gallipoli as "Dublin Hill" tells its own tale.

But there is another side to war, and tragic though it be, it must not be ignored, even now that the victory has been won. At the last phase of the fight the hills and ravines were flooded with crimson and purple and yellow, as the sun, in regal splendour, went down into the western sea. Those vivid colours were appropriate to the scene—the raging hearts of the opposing forces of men engaged in a death-grapple, the bitter humiliation of the defeated, and the glory of the victor's triumph. Then the night fell and the darkness was softly lit by a multitude of stars in a cloudless and almost blue sky. It seemed to speak most soothingly to the exhausted men of peace, silence, tranquillity, and the lapping coolness of running streams. Oh, to be able to get away from

this terrific din, this intimate contact with throngs of fellow-men, these devilish instruments of death hurtling through the air—away into loneliness and quietude, only for a little while. But there was no respite. The enemy were still close at hand. It would be dangerous to succumb to the almost irresistible inclination to lie down and sleep. There might come at any moment a counter attack by the enemy. Most of the men, therefore, had to "stand to arms" through the night.

The wounded had also to be attended to. Some of them, totally disabled, had lain where they fell, out on the open sandy plain under the burning sun. They were tortured by thirst. As their comrades in the reserve lines passed them by they could be heard moaning in pain, calling for mother or wife, craving for a drink to moisten their parched mouths. It was forbidden the men to fall out of the lines for the purpose of succouring the wounded. That is the duty of the stretcher-bearers, following behind, and to them, the orders are, it must be left. But the 10th Division were new soldiers, and humanity had not been quite suppressed by discipline in the ranks. The cry of stricken comrade was irresistible. "Water; a drop of water for the Blessed Virgin's sake," they gasped, with mouths open and eyes starting from their heads, as if startled by the sight of something dreadful. So the men stopped for a minute to put a water-bottle to the lips of a mangled friend; and often the murmured thanks stiffened out into rigidity and silence.

Some of the wounded succeeded in crawling into the rocky gullies. Others lay in the thickets of scrub. They were sheltered from the fierce rays of the sun, but were in danger of the equally terrible fate of death by burning. On every side, throughout the day, fires were blazing. The dry scrub and

bushes were set alight by petrol bombs. As a line of the Inniskilling Fusiliers were moving forward behind the Dublins, news was brought to them that there were some wounded men in an extensive patch of scrub that had just caught fire. Signaller John Wilkinson and another member of the battalion plunged into the thick smoke and brought out seven men. There was a burst of shrapnel, and Wilkinson, at the crowning point of his noble display of humanity, was killed.

When the wounded were brought down to the beach for conveyance in lighters and mine-sweepers to the hospital ships anchored about a mile and a half from the shore, the dead awaited reverent disposal. Of all the tasks that had to be performed that night in the starlight this was the pitifulest and most poignant. They were buried side by side, at the foot of Dublin Hill. With the death of these young lads in Gallipoli the light went out in many a home in far away Ireland. Mothers were weeping in sorrow and disconsolation. The country was torn by the conflicting emotions of pride in her sons and grief for their loss. It can be truly said that these young Irishmen gave their lives for civilisation and the freedom of Nationalities. But the immediate inspiration of their bravery was love of Ireland, and the resolve which sprang from it, that there should be no occasion for a word to be spoken in prejudice of the fighting qualities of the race, of the valour which Irish regiments have displayed on the battlefield at all times and in every clime.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE REST CAMP

HOW THE LEINSTERS CAUGHT A GLIMPSE OF THE NARROWS

For five days and nights the Irish troops who took Chocolate Hill, or Dublin Hill, on Saturday, August 7th, lay in the captured Turkish entrenchments before they could be relieved. The men were in the highest spirits over their exploit. But they felt stiff and sore and very, very dirty. They had sand in their clothes, sand in their hair, sand in their eyes, sand in their mouths and nostrils, and their faces and hands were black with the grime of powder and the smoke of the bush fires. And now, upon all that, they had to endure the particular discomforts and hardships which attend a campaign in a dry and torrid land.

The greatest trouble arose from the scarcity of fresh water to mitigate the tropical heat. The wells were few and far between, and being within range of the Turkish guns, were, all of them, constantly shelled. The quantity of water that could be brought to Dublin Hill was totally inadequate to satisfy the demand. The supply was strictly reserved for drinking purposes. Water was too scarce and precious to be wasted on personal ablutions. Better a filthy face than a parched mouth. The dirtiest

water was drunk with a relish. A Dublin Fusilier sighed for a draught of the cool and crystal water from the Wicklow hills. "Vartry water," exclaimed another; "I'd be quite content with a bucketful from the Liffey, even off the North Wall." Food was also hard to get. The commissariat had not yet been evolved out of the disorganisation attendant upon the landing. Under such a scorching sun the eating of the bully-beef in the men's ration bags was unthinkable. So their meals consisted chiefly of biscuits. Then there was the pest of myriads of flies. The Gallipoli flies were having the time of the life-history of their species. Big, ferocious, and insatiable freebooters, they would not be denied joining the troops at their meals and getting the bigger share of the scanty rations into the bargain. The worst affliction of all, however, was the stench of the half-buried and rapidly decomposing corpses in the captured trenches.

During the week which thus elapsed between the capture of Chocolate Hill and the still fiercer series of battles for the heights of Kiretsh Tepe Sirt, to the north, and of Sari Bair, to the south, which were to follow, regiments of the Irish Division were constantly engaged with the enemy on the foothills. Sari Bair was the strongest strategical position of the Turks in this part of Gallipoli. Like Achi Baba, towards the lower end of the Peninsula, it commands the Dardanelles, and especially the great military road along the shore of the Straits, over which the Turks were enabled quickly to send reinforcements of men, munitions, and stores from one point to another. One Irish Battalion actually gained a point on Sari Bair, from which they caught a glimpse of the Dardanelles. This was the 6th Royal Leinster Regiment of the 29th Brigade, which, as I have already mentioned, was separated from the 10th Division and sent south to co-operate with the forces from the Dominions. On Monday, August 9th, a

party of New Zealanders had fought their way up to a ridge of Sari Bair, but were unable to hold it; and as they came retreating down to the place where the 6th Leinsters were in reserve, they shouted: "Fix your bayonets, lads; they're coming over the hill." Sergeant-Major T. Quinlan, of the Leinsters, lying wounded in hospital, tells the story. "Everyone ran for his rifle and fixed his bayonet, picked up a bandolier or two of ammunition, and charged up the hill like a pack of deers, some without boots or jackets. I bet you the Turks never ran so quick in their lives, for our rifle fire and plunging bayonets, as we charged, were too much for them to stand. We regained the lost position in almost twenty minutes." And down below them, to the east, they could see that narrow ribbon of water which was the object of all this horrible killing—the Dardanelles glistening in the sun.

The positions held by the Irish regiments around Chocolate Hill were regularly bombarded. On August 9th Lieutenant D. R. Clery, of the 6th Dublins (a fine young Dublin man, very popular as a footballer), was missed. Captain J. J. Carroll, of the battalion, writing to a relative, says: "I know that he was in the very front of the firing line on August 9th, and one of our men told me on the ship coming home of Dan's magnificent conduct in carrying man after man out of danger. The man I refer to said that in saving others Dan had seemed utterly regardless of danger to himself." It was also in one of these outbursts of Turkish artillery that on Tuesday, August 10th, Captain James Cecil Johnston, Adjutant of the 6th Royal Irish Fusiliers, was killed. Before the war Captain Johnston—a County Fermanagh man—was Master of the Horse to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Second Lieutenant R. S. Trimble, who was wounded on the same occasion, describes the incident in a letter to his father, Mr. W. Copeland

Trimble, of Fermanagh. He was standing between his Colonel and his Adjutant in conversation when a shell came along. It tore the Colonel's arm to pulp, and though it passed Mr. Trimble, who was slightly out of the line of fire, the concussion of it dashed him violently to the ground, and then exploding, it blew Captain Johnston literally to pieces.

The Irish troops were greatly harassed by the enemy's sharpshooters. These snipers assumed all sorts of disguises and occupied every conceivable hiding place—up in the dwarf oak trees, lying prone in the scrub thickets, down in the rocks of the gullies —so that it was very difficult to spot them. Among those discovered was a peasant woman—the wife of a Turkish soldier—who lived with her old mother and her child in a little house near the Irish lines. She was a fine shot, and apparently confined her attention to stragglers, whose bodies she rifled; for several identification discs and a large sum of money were found in her possession. The daring and resource of the sharpshooters made them a deadly peril. One man caught in a tree wore a head covering and cloak formed of leaves. Another was found in a khaki uniform, stripped from a dead British soldier. The most perplexing feature of the sniping was that shots often came from the scrub behind. One of the victims of these tactics was Lieutenant E. M. Harper, of the 7th Royal Munster Fusiliers, who, while advancing with his company on August 9th, fell from a rifle shot fired from the rear.

The men of all the Irish battalions suffered from this game of hide-and-seek with death as they lay in the trenches on Dublin Hill. Relief came to them in the early hours of the morning of Friday, August 13th. They left at 1.30, and marched seven miles to a rest camp in a gully of Karakol Dagh running down to the Gulf of Saros, which they reached at 4.30, and a footsore, sleepy, haggard, unkempt,

bedraggled, hairy, unwashed, and unshaven crowd they were. They owed this bivouac to the success of the Munsters and Royal Irish Regiment in expelling the Turks from part of the ridge. When dismissed in the camp every man, officer and private alike, flung himself down in the open where he was and as he was, and had his first undisturbed sleep for a week In the morning they had the luxurious experience of getting out of their clothes and plunging into the sea. How they revelled in it, after that awful week of forced marches, battle, flies, smoke, stench, and sweat! What laughter and splashing! The shouts and the merry jests and their accents made the scene just such a one as might be witnessed at home in a swimming pool under Howth or Bray Head.

Afterwards the chief desire of all was to write home. As the men lay almost naked on the warm sands, under the scorching sun, many a letter was written to loved ones in Ireland, each telling how he got safely through his baptism of fire—the best news he could possibly send—and what a grand name his battalion had made for itself. Words of comfort and cheer are freely used in such of the letters as have been made public. "I'm happier than ever I was; it's just the sort of life I like." "You can't realise what high spirits I am in when I'm fighting. I feel as if it were all one long exciting Rugger match." "Don't you fret, I'll get through it all right; and even if I fall, sure we'll all meet again in the next world after a few brief years."

To call the camp a "rest" camp is, perhaps, a misnomer. It certainly afforded no refuge from the flies. "There is a fellow near me doing nothing but killing them in millions," writes one of the Dublins. "I had ten in a mug of tea as soon as it was handed to me," says another. This place of shelter was not safe even from the Turkish guns. As many as twenty-five men were knocked out by a shell. But

such as the camp was, the stay of the Irish in it was very brief indeed. On the morning of Sunday, August 15th, they were ordered to take up positions on the ridge above them, and wait for the word to go forward and attack. Though "burned like a red herring, and just as thin and thirsty," as one of the officers of the 7th Dublins said, describing himself and giving a comic picture of them all, they were again in good physical condition. And they had need to be. For they were now assigned a task that was to demand of them more fortitude and resolution and a bigger toll of life than even the taking of Dublin Hill.

It was fortunate, then, that on that very Sunday, August 15th, the great Irish Catholic festival of Our Lady's Day, the Catholic members of the forces were able to reinforce themselves with that sustaining power which the Mass and Holy Communion impart. The services were held by Father W. Murphy, one of the chaplains, under the sheltering hill, in the open air, not only within sound of the guns, but within sight of the bursting shells. It was a rudely improvised altar—a stone laid on trestles, a crucifix, and two candles—and the priest in his khaki service uniform under the vestments. Many of the men thought of the village chapel at home on that fine Sunday morning. They saw the congregation, all in their Sunday best, gathered outside, and while waiting for the bell to stop, exchanging gossip about the war, and inquiring of one another what was the latest from the Dardanelles, about Tom, and Mike, and Joe. The familiar scene was distinct to their mind's eye, and their beating hearts kept time to the measured tones of the chapel bell. After the Mass they were given the General Absolution. "It was very impressive," says Sergeant Losty, of the 6th Dublins, "to see Father Murphy standing out on the side of the hill, and all the battalions, with their

helmets off and holding up their right hands, saying the Act of Contrition and he absolving them."

At this point it is appropriate that I should refer to the cordial and intimate relations which existed between the Protestant and Catholic chaplains of the 10th Division. An officer of the 30th Brigade, consisting of the 6th and 7th Dublins and the 6th and 7th Munsters, gives the following pleasant picture of Father W. Murphy, Catholic priest, and the Rev. Canon McClean, Church of Ireland minister:—

"This morning Father Murphy said Mass in the trenches, where bullets, etc., were falling like hailstones. Oh! he is a splendid man. The Canon, a dear, good Irishman from Limerick, holds his services side by side with Father Murphy. They put a great spirit into the men, who love them both; in fact, almost adore them. I personally think that nothing I know of is half good enough for those two noble gentlemen. Catholic and Protestant are hand-in-hand, all brought about by the gentleness and undaunted courage displayed by these two splendid soldiers of Christ. Never since the landing has the roar of battle, be it ever so ferocious (and God only knows it is bad here at times), prevented these clergymen from forcing their way into the firing line and attending to our gallant sons of Ireland. Canon McClean is over fifty years of age and Father Murphy is forty-eight. You can imagine them, even though of such an age, never off their feet, as they go to and fro daily to their duties."

Both have been mentioned in Sir Ian Hamilton's despatches. Brigadier-General Nicol, in command of the 30th Brigade, writes in the warmest appreciation of their services. "We of the 30th Brigade are never likely to forget your fearless devotion to your duty," he writes to Canon McClean. "With you and Father Murphy we were indeed fortunate; and it was so nice to see you two the best of friends working hand in hand for the common good. You both set us a fine example." Canon McClean is rector of Rathkeale, County Limerick.

CHAPTER VIII

FIGHT FOR KISLAH DAGH

GALLANT STAND AND FALL OF THE 7TH DUBLINS

THE objective of the new operations was the last crest of Kiretsh Tepe Sirt, or, as some call it, Kislah Dagh—a continuation of the Karakol Dagh, which the Munsters had taken—beyond which it dips and swings southward. Telegraphing from Alexandria, on August 19th, the special representative of the Press Association says, in the vague way then enjoined by the Censor, "The attacking troops were a Division which was almost wholly Irish, and which had already the capture of Chocolate Hill to its credit." The battalions engaged were, as a fact, entirely Irish.

The Munsters and 6th Dublins, advancing from different sides, commenced the attack about midday. "In two hours we had not advanced twenty yards, so heavy and well directed was the fire of the enemy," writes the Colonel of one of the battalions of the Munsters. "Our second in command, most gallant of officers, was mortally wounded, and many others had fallen. Two companies, however, under cover of some dead ground, had managed to get some 200 yards ahead of the rest of the line, and these companies were now ordered to make a strong demon-

stration up the hill in order to try to weaken the resistance on the top. Fixing bayonets they rushed up with a wild Irish yell, and so great was their dash that they actually reached the crest. The Turks, appearing from behind every rock and bush, flung down their arms, and held up their hands. Many prisoners were taken, but the charge did not stop. On it swept along the ridge, and the last peak of all was captured before the enemy could make a stand." Here is an equally spirited account of the final charge, written by a man in the ranks, Private Jack Brisbane, of Buttevant, Co. Cork: "The 6th Munsters charged with the bayonet. You often heard a shout in the hurling field. It would not be in it. They were like so many mad men. Go on, Munsters! Up the Munsters! Even the sailors in the harbour heard it, and climbed up the rigging to try to get a view of it, and shouted themselves hoarse. Up the Munsters! It was grand. I am proud to be one of them. Father Murphy, our priest, said the evening after, when he came to give the boys his blessing: 'Well done, Munsters; you have done well,' so says the General. Father Murphy is a fine priest. His last word is: 'Boys, I'm proud I'm an Irishman.'"

Lieutenant Neol E. Drury, of the 6th Dublins, who before the war was a partner in a Dublin firm of papermakers, supplies the following spirited account of the action of his battalion in the operations:—

"About 4 o'clock everything seemed ready for a charge, so 'Fix bayonets' was the order, and, by Jove, the sight in the sun was ripping. There were several warships lying along the foot of the ridge, and all the crews were lining the decks watching the fight. When the flash of the bayonets showed up in the sun a tremendous cheer came up to us. 'Cheer, oh! the Dubs!' Everyone yelled like mad, and charged up the remaining piece of ground as if it had been level. The bhoys put it across the Turks properly, and I can tell you there

were not many shining bayonets when we finished. We drove them off the ridge, helter skelter, and they fairly bunked, throwing away rifles and equipment wholesale. When we got to the top we had five machine-guns playing on them as they ran down the other side, and as our chaps watched them from the summit they cheered and waved their helmets like mad, all the other troops back along the ridge and the ships' crews joining in."

"Throughout the night the enemy, strongly reinforced, delivered counter-attacks, one after another," writes the same commanding officer of the Munsters. "The fighting was severe and bloody, but we held on, and the morning found us still in possession of what we had gained, though our losses had been terribly heavy." He goes on: "I wish I could retail half the acts of individual heroism performed during those hours—how one sergeant and one corporal, the former I believe had been destined for the priesthood, the latter only a boy, threw back the enemy's hand grenades before they could burst one after another, and failing these threw large stones. Alas! before morning they had both paid the penalty of their gallantry. In the morning we were relieved, but the roll call was a sad revelation. My observer, who had been my groom when we had our horses, shot through the body in the charge, refused to be removed until the doctor promised him that he would personally tell me that he was wounded, fearing that I might think he had not followed me. The doctor faithfully fulfilled his promise, though it cost him a long walk at night. Such was the spirit of all ranks. Other units, of course, were equally gallant." An extract from another letter must be given here, as it reveals one of the little tragedies of war, and the endurance and resolution of the men. Sergeant Gallagher, of D company of the Inniskillings, which was transferred to the Munsters and went into action with them, got a bullet in his right eye and was made

stone blind. "I have a confession to make," he writes from hospital to the recruiting officer at Strabane, "I deceived you when you enlisted me. I had a glass eye, and now I have lost the other. I hope to be back in Strabane soon, but I shall never see the glen again, and watch the trout leaping behind the bridge. But I am happy, and we showed these Turks what Irishmen can do. No matter what happens I have done my bit, and I would not exchange with the best man at home."

The casualties among the other units were equally severe. On Sunday, late in the afternoon, the 7th Dublins got the word to push on to the crest of the hill and relieve the battalions that had captured it. They advanced in the mode of progression which alone was possible—slowly, in single file, crawling through the thick prickly scrub, sinking in the sand, stumbling over the rocks. It was laborious and exhausting work. All the time they were harassed by snipers. On the way up their commanding officer, Colonel Downing, was twice hit, and, being disabled, had to be left behind. Gaining the top of the hill, they relieved the Munsters and the 6th Dublins, and entrenched themselves as best they could, under the ridge, on the near side by working hard throughout the night.

At dawn on Monday morning, weary as they were from unremitting toil and want of sleep, they had to meet an attack by a large force of bomb throwers and riflemen. The Turks were at least three to one. Under cover of the night they had crept up the far side of the hill; and hiding, just under the ridge, behind rocks and bushes, hurled hand grenades across the twenty yards of rocky summit. The Dublins could not answer back. Rifle fire was of little use against a concealed enemy. There were no hand grenades.

A few of the Turkish bombs which had not exploded, being wrongly timed, were hurled back, their long fuses still alight. Numbers of the Dublins were falling, wounded or killed. Major Harrison decided to try the effect of a bayonet charge. This was the action which, at the moment, was just what the men most desired. For them it was maddening to be held behind entrenchments whence they were unable to exchange blow for blow—and more—with those who were dealing death to their ranks. They were aflame with that bloodthirsty rage of men in battle to get at the throats of their opponents, to crush them, if need be to tear them to pieces. So when the order to charge was given the Dublins sprang up into the open.

The first line was led by Captain Poole Hickman, of D company, who came of a well-known Clare family and was a barrister by profession. He never returned from the charge. As the Dublins appeared at the summit there was a splutter of fire along the opposite ridge, which was lined by Turkish marksmen. The men wavered and swayed uncertainly for a minute or two before the shower of bullets. Hickman was well in front, waving his revolver and shouting "On, Dublins!" That was the last that was seen of him alive. The Turks made a horrid din, shouting and shrieking, as if further to intimidate their antagonists. But the Irish can yell, too, and wild were their outcries as with fixed bayonets or clubbed rifles they scrambled across the rocky summit. Many of them did not go far. As they dropped they lay strangely quiet in clumsy attitudes. Among them was their superb leader, Major Harrison. Others passed scathless over the open ground, only to disappear for ever behind the ridge. These charges and hand-to-hand fights commenced about seven o'clock. The Turks fought with tenacity. It

was eleven o'clock before they gave way to the repeated Irish onslaughts.

During those four hours magnificent courage and daring were shown by the officers of the 7th Dublins. Many a young Irishman of brilliant promise was lost that day. They led their companies into the fray and were the first to fall. Captain Michael Fitz-Gibbon, a law student, and son of Mr. John Fitz-Gibbon, the Nationalist M.P., Captain R. P. Tobin, son of Surgeon Tobin, of Dublin—a gallant youth of twenty-one—and Second Lieutenant Edward Weatherill, an engineer, were killed. They were of priceless worth to their country and the beloved of their family circles. Major M. Lonsdale, of the 7th Dublins, writing to Mr. FitzGibbon, of the death of his son, says he died gallantly, leading part of A company. His death was instantaneous. All the other officers belonging to his company were also killed. "It was a desperate fight," adds Major Lonsdale, "and I do not think any but Irish soldiers could have stood up against the losses we suffered that Sunday and Monday." Lieutenant Ernest Hamilton, of D company, writing to Surgeon Tobin, states that when Harrison and Hickman fell Captain Tobin took command of the company. "Our men at this time," he says, "were getting badly knocked down. Paddy and I took up a position on the top of the knoll, and from there he controlled the fire and steadied the men. Such gallantry and coolness I have never witnessed. We fought like demons against three times our numbers, and held on, too. Our knoll came in for at least six attacks. During one of these your son was killed, shot through the head. He caught me by the shoulder, and when I turned round he had passed away. I carried him back some distance and placed him under shelter, but had to get back to my position to try to follow

his magnificent example. His death affected the men so much that I thought all was finished. They fought for another hour as they never fought before. Then they were relieved."

Similar scenes were being enacted in other parts of the field of operations. The casualties among the officers of all the Irish regiments engaged were very heavy. Captain W. R. Richards, of the 6th Dublins, a Dublin solicitor, and Lieutenant J. J. Doyle, an engineering student of the National University, were killed. So, too, was Lieutenant W. C. Nesbitt, of the same regiment. Before he enlisted Mr. Nesbitt was in the service of the Alliance Gas Company, Dublin. His company had captured a ridge when he was shot in the side. Some of his men ran to his aid and raised him up. At the same instant he was struck a second time and killed. Among the officers of other regiments who fell was Second Lieutenant Hugh Maurice MacDermot, 6th Irish Fusiliers, eldest son of The MacDermot of Coolavin, Co. Sligo. Writing of the officers of the 5th Irish Regiment, Father Peter O'Farrell, chaplain to the battalion, says: "Nothing could excel, if anything could equal, the conduct of the company and platoon commanders on the 16th. Some stood on the ridge waving their revolvers and pointing out the enemy to their men. Of course they sacrificed their lives, for scarcely a man appeared over the ridge but went down to the well-directed fire of the Turkish snipers. These brilliant men, however, feared nothing. They even sang Irish tunes and shouted 'Up, Tip,' to encourage the Irish soldiers."

Many gaps were made that day in Irish sporting and professional circles. Only a few more names of the dead can be given out of the many who showed splendid devotion to duty and supreme self-sacrifice: Captain Dillon Preston, of the 6th Dublin Fusiliers;

Captain George Grant Duggan, of the 5th Irish Fusiliers; Lieutenant J. R. Duggan, of the 5th Irish Regiment. The 7th Munster Fusiliers lost on August 16th alone four captains and two subalterns killed out of the thirteen officers who had survived the previous engagements. Among them were two Dublin men—Captain John V. Dunne, solicitor, and Lieutenant Kevin O'Duffy. Lieutenant Ernest M. Harper, of the same battalion, who was also killed, was a demonstrator in chemistry in Queen's University, Belfast. Lieutenant H. H. McCormac, 5th Irish Fusiliers, killed, was on the clerical staff at the Limerick offices of Guinness, the brewers. The famous D company of the 7th Dublins, led by Captain Poole Hickman and Captain Tobin, was practically wiped out. It was composed altogether of young men distinguished in football and cricket and other forms of sport. Many of them had ample private means, all belonged to the professional middle class of Dublin, and they felt it a high honour to serve in the rank and file of the Army.

Sir Bryan Mahon, the General in command of the 10th Division, sent a message to his troops saying that Ireland should be proud to own such soldiers. Ireland, indeed, is proud, though what happened was no more than what she expected. When the 7th Dublins were congratulated upon the stand they had made, their answer was: "And what the blank, blank, did you think we would do?" But with all her exultation in the valour of her sons, Ireland cannot close her ears to the cry of the Colonel of the 7th Munsters on seeing the few officers who returned from the fray: "My poor boys! My poor boys!"

There was a continuous series of desperate fights for the command of Sari Bair until the end of August. On the 21st of the month a general offensive took

place on a grand scale, in which the forces of all nationalities that landed at Suvla Bay were engaged. To strengthen the attack of these inexperienced and unseasoned but most gallant troops the veteran 29th Division was brought up from Cape Helles. In that Division were the survivors of the 1st Regular battalions of the Dublins, Munsters and Inniskillings who took part in that most frightful and glorious episode of the campaign—the landing at Sedd-el-Bahr on April 25th, under the murderous fire of the Turkish batteries stationed on the cliffs.

The new Irish battalions again distinguished themselves in the battle of August 21st. The 5th Connaught Rangers made a famous charge for which they were specially thanked by the Australian Commander of their Division. "The Rangers," writes an officer of the battalion, "issued out to attack and capture the Kabak Kuzu wells and the Turkish trenches in the neighbourhood. It did not take them long. The men poured out from a gap in the line, shook out to four paces interval, and with a cheer carried all before them, bayoneting all the Turks in the trenches, capturing the wells, and even capturing some ground on the Kaiajik Aghala. All that night the position was consolidated, and in the morning was still held by the Rangers. The next day we were thanked by three General Officers and congratulated on the magnificent charge." The 7th Dublins had to advance across an open plain under the heights of Sari Bair. An Australian soldier who stood on a neighbouring hill told me that while English battalions cautiously crossed in a series of rushes—falling flat on their stomachs at each outburst of the Turkish guns—the Dublins made their way over the uneven, hillocky ground at a run. To move slowly, with proper caution, would be torture to their Irish nature, impatient and ardent, in such circumstances.

One of the old Regular battalions in the 29th Division, the 1st Inniskillings, also greatly added to their renown by their dauntless resolution on August 21st. The battalion pushed up to the top of Hill 70, or Scimitar Hill, but were unable to maintain their position, owing, as the Brigadier-General of their Brigade states, "to the unavoidably inadequate artillery support and complete preparedness on the part of the enemy, resulting in heavy cross-fire from shrapnel, machine-guns and rifles." Again they climbed the hill and again were driven back. They made a third charge up the hill, and after a desperate struggle were compelled once more to yield ground that was now thickly strewn with their dying and dead. The Brigadier-General mentions that the Inniskillings undertook the two further assaults entirely on their own initiative. He adds: "Had there been any appreciable number of survivors in the battalion, and had Captain Pike been spared to lead them for a fourth time, they would have continued their efforts to secure complete possession of the hill."

The operations failed in their main purpose. Sari Bair remained in the possession of the Turks. Mistakes made by some of the Generals of Divisions are said, by Sir Ian Hamilton, the Commander-in-Chief, to have been largely to blame for things going wrong. But the fighting was not altogether barren of results. The most desperate engagements in the last days of August had for their object the capture of Hill 60, close to Sari Bair. An attack by the 5th Connaught Rangers on August 29th secured its possession.

The battalion was again congratulated on its gallantry by three different General Officers. One of them, General Sir A. J. Godley, in command of the New Zealanders, sent the following message to Colonel Jourdaine, of the 5th Connaughts:—

"Heartiest congratulations from the New Zealand and Australian Division on your brilliant achievement this evening, which is a fitting sequel to the capture of Kabak Kuzu wells, and will go down to history among the finest feats of your distinguished regiment. Personally as an Irishman who has served in two Irish regiments it gives me the greatest pride and pleasure that the regiment should have performed such gallant deeds under my command. Stick to what you have got and consolidate."

But all was in vain. Gallipoli had to be abandoned. The British withdrew from the Peninsula in January, 1916. The cost of the invasion in men, killed, wounded and missing, was 114,555. The casualties in the 10th Irish Division were cruel. At least a third of the forces were killed, disabled, or invalided by bullets, shells and dysentery.

Gallipoli had become a place of shadows and phantoms to the 10th Irish Division. As they looked back upon it they could not but think of the maelstrom of thick and prickly scrub, yielding sand, rocky defiles, and steep hills of that roadless country; of strong Turkish entrenchments, the continuous roar of guns, bullets, shells, concealed snipers; of broiling heat, sweat, thirst, tormenting flies, lack of water, and dysentery, into which they were plunged on August 7th; of scrambling and bloody fighting; and of the want of foresight and imagination in their high commanders that followed. It was a soldiers' campaign, in which the bayonet and the man behind it counted for everything, and the brains of the Generals—if indeed there were any—for nothing. The whole network of memories made a horrid nightmare of confusion, agony, and sacrifice of life unparalleled in the history of the British Army, relieved only—but how magnificently relieved—by the endurance and gallantry of the troops, unequalled and unsurpassable.

Yet the 10th Division were loth to leave that dread Peninsula, which, like a fearful monster, had de-

voured the young men of Ireland. They were sorry to go, because the purpose of the campaign was unachieved; still more sorry to part from their dead comrades. Because of those dead Gallipoli will ever be to the Irish race a place of glorious pride and sorrow. Well may that huddled heap of hills between Suvla Bay and Sari Bair be haunted by the wraith of Irish tragedy and grief; well may the wailing cry of the banshee be ever heard there.

CHAPTER IX

FOR CROSS AND CROWN

DEATH IN ACTION OF FATHER FINN OF THE DUBLINS AND FATHER GWYNN OF THE IRISH GUARDS

In which mood do soldiers generally go into battle —devotional or profane? An observer of authority, Mr. J. H. Morgan, professor of constitutional history at University College, London, who had a long stay at the Front, in France and Flanders on Government duty, commits himself to the curious statement that most men go into action, not ejaculating prayers, but swearing out aloud. However that may be as regards the non-religious soldier, it certainly is not true of the Catholic Irish soldier. By temperament and training the average Irish soldier, like most of his race, is profoundly religious at all times, and the experiences of the chaplains to the Catholic Irish regiments show that at no time is the Irish soldier more under a constant and reverent sense of the nearness of the unseen Powers, and his absolute dependence upon them, than at the awful moment when, in the plenitude of his youth and physical strength, he is confronted by the prospect of sudden death or bodily mutilation.

Of course, if a soldier does swear on the battlefield, that circumstance must not necessarily be accepted as proof either that he is destitute of religious feelings and principles, or that there is any thought of impiety

in his mind. Most likely the swearing is done quite unconsciously. At a time when the mental faculties are distraught and the tension on the central nervous system reaches almost to the breaking-point, it is probable that men no more know what they say than they do when they are under an anæsthetic; and that, in the one state as in the other, incongruous expressions—wholly inconsistent with the character of the patient—come to the lips from the deeps of subconsciousness. There is nothing like constant nearness to death to make men generally turn their thoughts to things serious and solemn. The experiences of Catholic chaplains tell how widely the sense of religion—the vanity of earthly concerns, the importance of eternity, the wish to be at peace with God—has been stirred by the war even in breasts that probably had not harboured in the years of peace a thought that there was any other world but this. Ah, the eagerness of the Irish Catholic soldiers to have sin washed away by confession and the absolving words of the priest!

The Irish are the most religious soldiers in the British Army; and it is because they are religious that they rank so high among the most brave. The two characteristics, religious fervour and fearlessness of danger, have always been very closely allied. In the average Irishman there is a blend of piety and militancy which makes him an effective soldier. Largely for the reason that he is a praying man, the Irish Catholic soldier is a fine fighting man. His religion gives him fortitude in circumstances of unmitigated horror, resignation to face the chances of being mangled or killed at the call of duty; and from this ease of mind spring that bravery and resolution in action which are the most essential characteristics of the soldier. In order that the Catholic soldier may thus show himself at his best, it is necessary that he

should have ready access to the rites of the Church. He wants the priest to be near him, and though the Catholic army chaplains appointed for active service are comparatively few, though their movements are frequently impeded by the ever-changing developments in the military situation, the priest is usually close at hand at his service. Thus the Irish Catholic soldier goes into battle stimulated by the services of his chaplain, praying that God may bring him safely through, or for a merciful judgment should he fall.

Extraordinarily varied and trying as have been the experiences of the priesthood in the mission-field, it is probable that never has it been subjected to so severe a trial of nerve and endurance on its physical side as it is in the present War of Nations. As to the kind of men best suited for the service, the Rev. Wiliam Forrest, an Irish Catholic chaplain himself, writes:—"Priests between thirty and forty, not afraid of some rough and tumble, with, perhaps, an adventurous vein in their composition, and with plenty of zeal and sympathy, would be the most suitable—riders and good horse-masters rather than ponderous theologians and professors, though, indeed, these would have much to learn, and would very greatly profit, by their experience." Certainly the record of Catholic army chaplains shines gloriously for its zeal, self-sacrifice, and heroism; and its sanctifying light illumines the awful tragedy of suffering and woe that has befallen the human race.

The Catholic chaplain has also various duties to perform when his men are resting in billets, on guard in the lines of communication, or lying wounded or ill in the base hospitals. He goes about in khaki, like the other officers of the battalion to which he is attached, save that he wears the Roman collar and black patches on his shoulder straps. His equipment or kit is usually heavy. It contains the stone for the

altar, the vestments, the sacred vessels, the candles, the crucifix, and other requisites for the Mass. On his person he always carries the Holy Oils and the Viaticum for the last sacrament of all, when the soul of the mortally wounded soldier is about to take flight into the eternal.

Services are held in all sorts of places and on every possible occasion. Lieutenant C. Mowlan, medical officer to the 1st Irish Fusiliers, writes:—"We have Mass out in the open, and it is most gratifying to see the long line of men waiting for confession, and at Mass the devotion with which they attend, and tell the beads of our Blessed Lady, a devotion so dear for many reasons, historical as well as devotional, to the heart of the Catholic Irishman. A large crowd attended Communion." A door laid upon two trestles or a packing-case often serves as an altar, with the two burning candles, and a few hastily gathered evergreens for decorations. Mass is frequently celebrated in the very early hours of the morning before the dawn begins to creep into the sky. And a strange and wonderful spectacle it is! Black darkness, save for the two candles; the priest offering up the Sacrifice at the rudely improvised altar; the soldiers, each with his rifle, and weighed down with his kit and ammunition, grimed with the mud of the trenches and the smoke of battle, kneeling in a circle round the light. They receive the final Blessing with bowed heads, then, crossing themselves, they stand up for the last Gospel, their haggard and unshaven faces all aglow with religious exaltation.

But perhaps the most moving and inspiring scene of all is that of giving the General Absolution to a battalion ordered to advance immediately into action. Father Peal, S.J., of the Connaught Rangers, enables us vividly to see it in the mind's eye. The regiment were in billets in Bethune when one winter's morning

at three o'clock they received instructions to make an attack. Before the men left, Father Peal got the Colonel's permission to speak to them. They were drawn up in a large square behind a secular school, called "Collège de Jeunes Filles," when their chaplain, mounting the steps of the porch, thus addressed them in the dark: "Rangers, once again at the bidding of our King and country you are going to face the enemy. Before you go, turn to God and ask of Him pardon for your sins. Repeat the act of contrition after me." Then the square resounded with the fervent ejaculations of the men. "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Oh, my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee. I detest my sins most sincerely, because they are displeasing to Thee, my God, who art most worthy of all my love; and I promise never to offend Thee again." "I shall now," says the priest, "give you Absolution in God's name. 'Dominus noster Jesus Christus vos absolvat et ego auctoritate Ipsius vos absolvo a peccatis vestris, in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.' May God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, bless you and lead you to victory. Amen." As the priest blessed them, the men again made the sign of the Cross. No wonder that men of such deep faith and so heartened by the services of their chaplains should fight valiantly.

The tireless care and solicitude of the Catholic chaplain for his men is seen in the fine record, during a long and arduous campaign, of Father Francis Gleeson, of the 2nd Munster Fusiliers, who has been in Flanders and France since the outbreak of the war. If you meet a man of the 2nd Munsters, just mention the name of Father Gleeson, and see how his face lights up. "Father Gleeson, is it!" exclaimed one whom I encountered among the wounded at a London hospital. "He's a warrior and no mistake.

There's no man at the Front more brave or cooler. Why, it is in the hottest place up in the firing line he do be to give comfort to the boys that are dying." "And, do you know," he added with a laugh, as he recalled the chaplain's playful and sportive ways, "Father Gleeson brought us mouth-organs, and showed that he could play 'Tipperary' with the best of us." Another man described a meeting with Father Gleeson in a village close to the first line of trenches, where the chaplain was waiting to attend to the wounded. "It got so hot with stray bullets that he gave me absolution as I stood in the street of the ruined village. It was very dramatic, I covered with mud and standing bareheaded, and he blessing me. I'll never forget it." I gathered, too, that Father Gleeson is the counsellor of the battalion as well as its chaplain. The men go to him with their temporal troubles of all kinds, and never fail in getting sympathy, guidance, and help.

The chaplains of all denominations are equally devoted. But the Catholic priest has a special impulse to self-sacrificing duty for two reasons—first, the desire that Catholics have to die shriven and anointed; and the softening of the bereavement of parents and relations which comes from the knowledge that Paddy, Jamsie, Joe, or Mike had been to his duty before the battle, or had the priest with him when he died. Accordingly, no consideration of danger to himself will deter the Catholic chaplain from going into the firing line to administer the last rites. In the circumstances, it was to be expected that though the chaplains of all the denominations are zealous and brave in the discharge of their sacred duties, the first chaplain of any denomination to give his life for his men should be an Irish priest, Father Finn, of the 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers, who fell in Gallipoli.

A Tipperary man, serving on the English Mission in the Province of Liverpool, Father Finn joined the 1st Dublins on their arrival in England from India for active service, in November, 1914. The Dublins, with the 1st Munster Fusiliers, took part, as I have already described, in the first landing of British troops on the Peninsula, at Sedd-el-Bahr, on Sunday, April 25th, 1915. On the Saturday morning Father Finn heard the confessions of the men on board the transport, off Tenedos, said Mass, and gave Holy Communion. Then on Sunday morning he asked permission of the commanding officer of the battalion to go ashore with the men. Colonel Rooth tried to persuade him to remain on the transport, where he could give his services to such of the wounded as were brought back. "You are foolish to go; it means death," said the officer. "The priest's place is beside the dying soldier; I must go," was Father Finn's decisive reply. For these and other particulars of the gallant action of the priest, I am mainly indebted to the Rev. H. C. Foster, Church of England naval chaplain, who was in one of the warships engaged in the bombardment of the Peninsula at the landing, and highly esteemed Father Finn as a friend.

Father Finn left the transport for the shore in the same boat as the Colonel. When the boats crowded with the Dublins got close to the beach a hail of shrapnel, machine-gun fire, and rifle fire was showered upon them by the Turks, hidden among the rocks and ragged brushwood on the heights. Numbers of the Dublins were killed or wounded, and either tumbled into the water or dropped on reaching the beach. This fearful spectacle was Father Finn's first experience of the savagery of war. It terribly upset him. He at once jumped out of the boat and went to the assistance of the bleeding and struggling men. Then he was hit himself. By the time he

had waded to the beach his clothing was riddled with shot. Yet disabled as he was, and in spite also of the great pain he must have been suffering, he crawled about the beach, affording consolation to the dying Dublins. I have been told that to give the absolution he had to hold up his injured right arm with his left. It was while he was in the act of thus blessing one of his men that his skull was broken by a piece of shrapnel. The last thought of Father Finn was for the Dublins. His orderly says that in a brief moment of consciousness he asked: "Are our fellows winning?" Amid the thunder of the guns on sea and land his soul soon passed away. He was buried on the beach where he died, and the grave was marked by a cross, made out of an ammunition box, with the inscription—"To the memory of the Rev. Capt. Finn." Gallipoli is classic ground. It is consecrated by the achievements of the ancient Greeks over the Persian hordes at the dawn of Western civilisation. It is now further hallowed as the grave and monument of that warrior priest, Father Finn, and the gallant Dublins and Munsters.

The next Catholic chaplain to lose his life on active service was Father John Gwynn, S.J., of the 1st Irish Guards, who was killed in the trenches near Vermelles on October 11th, 1915. Born at Youghal, and reared in Galway, Father Gwynn entered the Society of Jesus in 1884. At the outbreak of the war he was one of the governing body of University College, Dublin, and volunteering for active service he was attached, the first week of November, 1914, to the Irish Guards, as their first war chaplain. A big, handsome man, and soldierly in appearance, Father Gwynn was fitting in every way to be chaplain to so splendid and almost wholly Catholic body of Irishmen as the Irish Guards. His experiences at the Front—the devotion he showed

to his duties and the risks he ran—prove more than the truth of the old saying that every Irishman is born either a soldier or a monk, for they establish that often he is born both.

Father Gwynn was the first chaplain of any denomination attached to the British Expeditionary Force to be wounded. That was during the memorable engagement at Cuinchy, on February 1st, 1915, when Michael O'Leary won the Victoria Cross. What a moving picture of piety it presents! The task of the Irish was to retake positions in the brickfields captured by the Germans from the Coldstream Guards. Eager to retrieve the position the Coldstreams first advanced, but being met by a heavy fire from the enemy, they showed signs of wavering. Then a company of the Irish Guards were ordered out. They had received absolution and Communion behind the trenches, a few days before, from Father Gwynn, and their chaplain was still with them at the supreme moment. Now, before advancing, they knelt in silent prayer for a minute. Then, each man making the sign of the Cross, they sprang to their feet, and dashing in wide open order across the exposed ground, swept by the enemy's fire, they hunted the Germans from the brickfields. We all know that when the story of Michael O'Leary's achievement that day became known, half the world stood up bare-headed in acknowledgment of his gallantry. I have been told that the incident which was most talked of from end to end of the British lines was that of the Guardsmen kneeling down in prayer before the charge. Nothing like it ever occurred before. At least it is unprecedented in the history of the English Army of modern times. Those who saw them say that, as the Irish Guards dashed across the plain, they had an expression of absolute happiness and joy on their faces. Surely an episode that will live in the crowded annals of this war. It

was then that Father Gwynn was wounded. He said the last thing he remembered was seeing the Irish Guards get to the top of their trench when a lurid blaze seemed to flash into his eyes with a deafening crash. He was hurled back five yards or so and lay unconscious for some minutes. When he came to he felt his face all streaming with blood and his leg paining him. He was suffocated, too, with a thick, warmy, vile gas, which came from the shell. "A doctor handaged me up," he goes on, "and I found I was not so bad—splinters of the shell just grazed my face, cutting it; a bit, too, struck me an inch or so above the knee and lodged inside, but in an hour's time, when everything was washed and bandaged, I was able to join and give Extreme Unction to a poor Irish Guardsman who had been badly hit."

I have before me a number of letters written by Father Gwynn. They are all most interesting. In every one of them he has something to say in praise of the Catholicity and valour of the Irish Guards. "We have to have Mass in a field," he writes in one letter, "the Irish Guards are nearly all Catholics, and we are at present the strongest battalion in the Guards' Brigade. The men then sing hymns at Mass, and it is fine to hear nearly a thousand men singing out in the open at the top of their voices. You have no idea what a splendid battalion the Irish Guards are! You have Sergeant Mike O'Leary, V.C., with you. I often have a chat with him when he comes to see me. But do you know that there are plenty of men in the Irish Guards who have done as bravely as O'Leary, and there's never a word about it." In another letter, written a few weeks before his death, he says:—"It would have done your heart good to hear them last night in the little village church where we are just for the moment, singing the 'O Salutaris,' 'Tantum Ergo,' 'Look Down, O Mother Mary,' and at the

end the 'Hail Glorious St. Patrick.' A Grenadier officer who happened to be present, having ridden over from where the Grenadiers are, said it was worth coming ten miles to hear. I feared for the roof of the church, especially when they came to the last verse of the hymn to St. Patrick."

Throughout the morning of the day he received his mortal wound, Father Gwynn had had a most arduous and anxious time in the trenches. It was during the fighting round Hill 70, after the Battle of Loos. An Irish Guardsman writes:—

"I saw him just before he died. Shrapnel and bullets were being showered upon us in all directions. Hundreds of our lads dropped. Father Gwynn was undismayed. He seemed to be all over the place trying to give the Last Sacrament to the dying. Once I thought he was buried alive, for a shell exploded within a few yards of where he was, and the next moment I saw nothing but a great heap of earth. The plight of the wounded concealed beneath was harrowing. Out of the ground came cries of 'Father, Father, Father,' from those who were in their death agonies. Then as if by a miracle Father Gwynn was seen to fight his way through the earth. He must have been severely injured, but he went on blessing the wounded and hearing their confessions. The last I saw of him was kneeling by the side of a German soldier. It was a scene to make you cry."

Shortly after this scene Father Gwynn was at luncheon with four other officers in the Headquarters' dug-out when a German shell landed in the doorway and burst. Captain Lord Desmond FitzGerald (brother of the Duke of Leinster) was slightly hit. Colonel Madden was so severely wounded that he died some days afterwards. Father Gwynn received as many as eight wounds. One piece of the shell entered his back and pierced one of his lungs. He was sent to hospital at Bethune, and died there the next morning. In the Bethune cemetery his grave is marked by a marble monument which bears these two inscriptions:—

"R.I.P.
REV. FATHER JOHN GWYNN, S.J.
Attached to the
1st Irish Guards.
He Died at Bethune on October 12th, 1915, from
Wounds Received in Action near Vermelles
on October 11th, 1915.
Aged 49 years.
This Monument has been erected by all Ranks of the 1st Bat. Irish Guards in grateful Remembrance of their Beloved Chaplain, Father Gwynn, who was with them on Active Service for nearly twelve months from Nov., 1914, until his death, and shared with unfailing devotion all their trials and hardships."

The wonder, indeed, is that many more Catholic chaplains have not been killed. Father James Stack, of the Redemptorist Order—a County Limerick man—had a narrow escape from being killed by German rifle fire as he was attending to a dying Irish soldier between the opposing lines. The soldier was heard in the British trenches calling for a priest. Father Stack crept out to him, heard his confession, anointed him, and lay by his side praying until he passed away. While he was engaged on this sublime errand of mercy the priest was fired on by the Germans, but he got back unhurt. He was mentioned in Sir John French's valedictory despatch. A dramatic story is also told of another dauntless Catholic chaplain. One bitter winter's night eight men left a British trench to bomb the Germans. None of them returned. Their comrades were consumed with anxiety as to their fate. Were they prisoners, were they dead, or were they lying wounded in the mud and the slush? The Catholic chaplain of the battalion volunteered to go out in front and try to learn what had become of them. After some hesitation his request was granted. "Donning his surplice and with a crucifix in his hand the priest proceeded down one of the saps and climbed out into the open," writes a staff correspondent of the Central News at the Front. "With their eyes glued

to periscopes, the British line watched him anxiously as he proceeded slowly towards the German lines. Not a shot was fired by the enemy. After a while the chaplain was seen to stop and bend down near the German wire entanglements. He knelt in prayer. Then with the same calm step he returned to his own lines. He had four identity discs in his hand, and reported that the Germans had held up four khaki caps on their rifles, indicating that the other four were prisoners in their hands."

Father J. Fahey, a Tipperary man, made a lasting reputation among the Dominion Forces in Gallipoli by his services as chaplain to the 11th Australian Battalion. The Archbishop of Perth (Australia) got a letter from an officer in Gallipoli which said: "You are to be congratulated for sending us such an admirable chaplain as Father Fahey. He is the idol of the 11th Battalion, and everyone, irrespective of creed, has a good word to say for him." Dr. McWhae, one of the medical officers, puts in a different way the estimation in which Father Fahey is held: "He is one of the finest fellows in the world, and everybody swears by him. He landed at Gallipoli with the covering party, and spends his time in the trenches." Before the troops left Lemnos Island for the first landing at Anzac on April 25th, 1915, the Brigadier went round and told the chaplains of all denominations that they could go aboard the hospital ships if they wished. Father Fahey and Father McMenamin, a chaplain with the New Zealand Forces, said they would go in the transports with the men and also accompany them into the trenches. And, sure enough, these two priests were the first of the chaplains in the firing line looking after their men. "The 'Padre,' as he is called by his battalion," writes the officer in his letter to the Archbishop of Perth, "fills in his spare time carrying up provisions to the men at the front, and helps the wounded back, and I can tell

you he is not afraid to go where the bullets fall pretty thickly." Father Fahey has done more in the way of utilising his spare time—he has led the men in a charge against the Turkish entrenchments. On an occasion when all the officers had been killed or disabled he called on the remnants of the company, "Follow me, and though I have only a stick, you can give the Turks some Western Australian cold steel."

Father Fahey himself gives the following racy account of the discomforts which attended the discharge of his duties in Gallipoli:—

"I have had my clothes and boots off only once during the past month. I had a wash twice, and one shave, so I can assure you I do not look a thing of beauty. I am cultivating a beard, and in another month I expect to look as fierce as a Bedouin chief Water is scarce; we only get enough to drink and cook, but none to wash; so we are not too clean. I have had several narrow escapes, so many, in fact, that I wonder why I am still alive. I had four bullets in my pack, one through a jam tin out of which I was eating, which spoiled the jam and made me very wild. One through my water-bottle; one through a tobacco-tin in my pocket; one took the epaulette off my tunic, and once I had nineteen shrapnel bullets through a waterproof sheet on which I was lying only a few minutes previously. I have lost count of the shells that nearly accounted for me; I hardly expect to get through the business alive, but seeing that I have been lucky so far I may."

The last I heard of Father Fahey was that he was lying wounded in an hospital at Malta. Writing of his work as a priest, he says: "I have heard confessions in all kinds of weird places, with the shrapnel bursting overhead and bullets whizzing around. I go along the trenches every day in case anyone might want to see me. It is all so strange and uncanny. Passing along the trenches, a soldier with his rifle through a loophole and one eye on the enemy may call me to hear his confession; while it is being done the bullets are plopping into the sandbags of the parapet a few inches away. It is consoling and satisfactory work, if a little dangerous."

The part of the chaplain's work that is most harrowing to him personally, but most consoling to those whom he serves, is that of ministering to the wounded at the hospital clearing stations nearest to the firing line. "Sometimes when I hold them up on the stretcher to try to get them to take a drink," writes Father L. J. Stafford, one of the chaplains to the 10th Irish Division in Gallipoli, "I think that Christ must have foreseen this awful slaughter and borne it in His Passion as part of the sorrows of mankind, and I try to associate myself with the feelings of His Virgin Mother." The acts and the thoughts of the priest blend together in perfect harmony like the words and music of an inspired hymn to the Almighty. Well might Father Stafford add: "I am in great peril, but doing my duty fearlessly. Could man wish for more?"

As the priest kneels down by these dying Irish youths he receives many last messages to send to the loved ones at home, a sacred trust which he is most scrupulous faithfully to discharge. There are thousands of mothers in Ireland grieving for darling sons lying mouldering in Flanders, France, and Gallipoli. If anything can ease the gnawing pain at the heart of these bereaved mothers, it surely must be the receipt of one of those beautifully sympathetic and healing letters which they receive from the Irish Catholic chaplains. I have had the privilege of reading numbers of them, and happily in none have I come upon any heroics about the nobility of the youth's self-sacrifice and the grandeur of the cause for which he died. To the Irish Catholic mother such phrases bring no consolation. His death tells her that her son has done his duty; that is enough; and her sole concern is with his eternal salvation. It is on this point that the chaplain is at pains to reassure her.

"I saw him last at 7.30 p.m. on July 14th. He was

very exhausted, and I could see that he would not last long. He tried to give me his mother's address, but failed. All he could say was: 'Not weep. With God.' I told him I should tell his mother not to weep because he would be with God, and he shook his head in consent. He then said: 'Good-bye, Father. God bless you.'" So does Father Felix Couturier, O.P., describe the death in hospital at Alexandria of Lance-Corporal Wilkerson, 7th Dublin Fusiliers, wounded at Gallipoli. Then there is the consoling letter of Father O'Herlihy, chaplain in Egypt, to Mrs. Kelleher, Cork, telling of the death of her son, Patrick, a private in the 1st Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers, also wounded in Gallipoli. Here is an extract from it:—

"I've seen many in pain and suffering since the war began, but few have I seen to bear it all so willingly and so patiently as your son, Paddy; for God and His Blessed Mother were helping him a lot. About a week after the operation his sufferings increased, and on Sunday morning last, when I said Holy Mass at the hospital, he again asked me to bring him Holy Communion, as he was confined to bed. You could see the happiness in his features when Our Blessed Lord came to him again to give him new strength and grace to bear up. He said to me after: 'Father, every time you'll say Holy Mass here, you will bring me Holy Communion again, won't you? I don't like to trouble you, but I long so much to receive.' Poor Paddy! He was such a good boy! I know, dear Mrs. Kelleher, you have long since put your son in God's holy hands, leaving him entirely to God. And God and Mary will now, I know, reward you and give you help and grace to bear for the love of them the sorrowful news it's my hard lot to be the first to send you, perhaps. Your poor Paddy passed away to the God whom he loved so much, and for whom he bore all so patiently. Don't fear for Paddy. He is happy now, poor lad, after many sufferings."

Could there be anything more precious to an Irish Catholic mother than such an account of the last hours of the son of her heart—*a vic mo chree*—dying of battle wounds in a far foreign land?

CHAPTER X

THE GREAT PUSH AT LOOS

HISTORIC FOOTBALL CHARGE OF THE LONDON IRISH, WITH THE GERMAN TRENCHES AS GOAL

WHAT a stirring story of Irish gaiety and resolution is that of the charge of the London Irish Rifles in the great advance upon the mining village of Loos, on Saturday, September 25th, 1915! "Hurrah, the London Irish, hurrah!" The shout ran along the British Lines on Tuesday, September 28th, as the battalion, with many gaps in their ranks, returned after the splendid stand against the terrific German counter-attack which followed the charge, when, according to the General of their Brigade, they helped to save the 4th Army Corps.

"The lucky Irish!" That is one of the names they are known by at the Front. They are given posts of difficulty and danger, and so well do they acquit themselves that the company officers get Military Crosses, and the Distinguished Conduct Medal is liberally distributed among the rank and file. Yet their casualties are remarkably low. The jealous and the profane in other London battalions account for it, I am told, by reviving the ancient gibe about the devil always taking special care of his own. It is true the London Irish are up to all sorts of "divilment"—as we say in Ireland—whether in the trenches or in billets. I have heard no more delicious war anecdote than that which

tells of a fine trick they played on the enemy. Their telephone linesmen happened to find two live German cables on the ground behind their trenches. The linesmen, without as much as saying "by your leave" to the Germans, promptly fitted wires to the cables, and for many weeks they had a most serviceable electric installation at the Battalion Headquarters, officers' dug-outs, and dressing-stations, with power "milked" from the enemy.

That is the Irish kind of "divilment," and it is "divilment" that the Devil himself would disown, for it tends to spoil the knavish designs he has in hand when he uses the Germans as his fitting instruments. The London Irish, as a matter of fact, are noted for their religious devotion and practices. I read in the *Spectator* an interesting correspondence round the question whether the Anglican chaplains were of any earthly good at the Front. Nothing was said, I noticed, about their heavenly uses. But a woman sent a remarkable letter she had received from her son in the trenches. "There is another man who has great influence out here," he wrote. "He is a priest attached to an Irish regiment. He insists upon charging every time with the men, and no one dare protest. He is absolutely the idol of the regiment." This is Father Lane-Fox, the chaplain of the London Irish, who joined in the famous charge of the battalion at Loos, absolving those who were shot as they fell, and arriving in the German trenches with the foremost. And many of the men will tell you that they are "the lucky Irish," because of the comfort and reassurance they derive from the prayers and self-sacrificing services of their chaplain. The battalion are also able to warm their hearts and fire their blood with the strains of the ancient Irish war-pipes. This old barbaric music has magic in it. It transforms the Gael. It reawakens in the deeps of their being, even in this twentieth century, impressions, moods, feelings,

inherited from a wild, untamed ancestry for thousands of years, and thus gives them, more than strong wine, that strength of arm and that endurance of soul which make them invincible.

So the London Irish were ready when the great day came. Three Divisions of the 4th Army Corps took part in the battle of Loos. The London Irish were in a Division exclusively composed of Brigades of London Territorials, and they had the honour of being selected to lead that Division in the attack. As the result of the battle a double length of trenches were carried along a line of four miles, and to a depth, at its greatest, of four miles. The whole of this area, amounting to at least twelve square miles, around the village of Loos, between Hulluch and Lens, was a desperate network of trenches and bomb-proof shelters.

On the night of September 24th the London Irish received their orders and marched out to take up their allotted positions. "What a sight!" writes one of the men. "Almost pitch dark, as light near the firing line must not be—just a few glimmers here and there to mark cross roads, and those are lanterns, mostly on the ground, in charge of one or more soldiers, according to the importance of the posts, whose job it is to control the traffic. Now and again a more or less lurid illumination comes from the star shells that are used between the trenches while searchlights sweep across the sky. Artillery flashes continuously and the roar of the guns is added to the crash and rattle of the traffic on the roads." At a point in the march Brigadier-General Twaites was standing to see the battalion go by. He shook hands with the officers and wished them "Good luck." He told the men that he was expecting great things of them. "Remember," he said, "that the London Irish has been chosen to lead the whole Division."

The trenches were reached about midnight. It was an inclement and dreary time. Rain was falling in

torrents. For over six hours the men had to wait in sodden clothes in a trench of slush for the order which would mean death to many, to others racking and disabling wounds, and to all who survived the heart-ache for loved comrades gone for ever. Yet how cheerful they were! To say that none of them were afraid would be to convey that each was a bloodless abstraction. Whatever else an Irishman may be he certainly is never that. He is a hot-blooded human creature, with more than his share of the passions and desires which agitate the heart of man, and so he is prone at times to have fits of depression and despair. It is possible, then, that the minds of some were darkened by gloomy forebodings. But as an instance of the general stout-heartedness of the men, an officer told me that many of them took out cigarettes, and, having lighted them, held the burning match at arm's length to see if their hands were steady as they waited under the shadow of death. Just at the last moment, too, the liveliest interest was aroused by a rumour which ran along the trenches. It was said that some particularly bright spirits in the battalion had arranged to make the coming charge for ever memorable by an act of unparalleled daring. What is it to be? The question was eagerly put. But those in the secret would not say more than the remark that the nature of it no one would ever guess even if he were to sit down and give all his life to it, and work overtime as well.

At half past six o'clock in the morning the signal came from Major Beresford—a shrill note of the whistle and the cry, "Irish up and over." Gas had been turned on some little time before to help in clearing the ground for the advance, and as the wind was slightly favourable it drifted, a mass of dark vapour, towards the German trenches. But as there was a danger that the cloud might be overtaken, if the charge were successful and rapid, most of the men

put on their gas helmets, and fearful and wonderful monsters they looked as, in obedience to the company officers' order, "Over you go, lads," they mounted the parapets. Over they went by platoons, with half a minute's interval between each, and though the enemy immediately opened fire they formed up in four splendid lines, with bayonets fixed and rifles at the slope before they charged.

Then it was that the grand secret was disclosed, a thing almost incredible and unthinkable, indeed. A football was dropped by members of the London Irish Rugby Club in the ranks, and as they charged they kicked it before them across a plain as flat, grassy, and bare of cover as the Fifteen Acres in the Phœnix Park, or the upper stretch of Wimbledon Common. A game of football on the border line between life and death! What a fantastic conception! No wonder that the French troops who were watching the advance were astounded by the spectacle. "It is magnificent, but it is not war!" Possibly the French at Loos had the same thought that the French at Balaclava had when they saw the charge of the Light Brigade. But, wait a while. Despite the apparent oddity and inconsequence of the incident, we shall see that behind it there was a grim and dread purpose well befitting the occasion.

On the Rugby playing fields the rush and dash of the Irish are famous. Who that was there will ever forget the glorious international match that was played at Twickenham between England and Ireland the year before the war, with the King and Prime Minister among the tens of thousands of fascinated spectators of the finest game that ever was seen? Several of the grand young fellows who superbly contended for the mastery of the ball on that great day are buried close to where they fell in France and Flanders, gallantly leading their men as company officers (the thought of it is enough to make one weep), and they played the

game on these different fields, according to their separate national characteristics—equally clean-handed and chivalrous, both, as sportsmen, incapable of a mean trick or taking an opponent at an unfair advantage; disciplined, resourceful, dexterous, and deft the English; light-hearted, frank, ardent, and dare-devilled the Irish. So, too, at Loos the London Irish dashed forward with the same rapture in the game that they used to display in a match on their grounds at Forest Hill, shouting their slogan, "On the ball, London Irish!" They kicked the ball before them, not this time in the face of an opposing English, Welsh, or Scottish pack, but against unceasing volleys of shrapnel and rifle fire which brought many of them down, dead or disabled.

One man who was in the charge told me that at first he had a confused sense of a clamorous hubbub and of comrades falling around him. Afterwards he saw dimly—as if still in a bad dream—the football being kicked, and there came vaguely back to his mind the talk in the trenches as they waited for the whistle. Then he had a shock of surprise which brought everything into sharp reality; and the exhilaration of the episode restoring him to normality and confidence, he followed the ball with the others until it was kicked right into the enemy's trench with a joyous shout of "Goal!" Thus this exhibition of cool audacity—unparalleled, perhaps, in the annals of war—instead of retarding the advance added immensely to its go. It will be historic, that game of football amid the thunders and the lightnings of the field of battle, with the German trenches for the goal; and soaring up from the very depths of the awful tumult of the fight will ever be heard, "On the ball, London Irish!"

So the first line of German trenches was reached. The barbed wire entanglements had been blown to pieces by shell fire before the attack. Another effect of that terrific bombardment, which lasted nineteen days,

was the cowed and dazed condition of the Germans. They were so easily and quickly disposed of by the first line of London Irish that the other lines pressed forward, scrambling across the trench over the bodies of killed and wounded enemies; and, as they did so, catching glimpses through the smoke of the haggard and frightened faces of the grey-clad survivors making but a feeble resistance or surrendering without striking a blow.

The advance to the second line of German trenches was not so easy. Here was an inferno of tangled wreckage strewn over mud, smoke-dimmed, and torn with shrapnel, through which the men could advance but slowly, with stumbling feet and gasping breath, while their ears were assailed with horrid noises—screaming, yelling, crashing, pounding, cheering, screeching. Major Beresford, who led the charge, fell with a bullet through his lung on the way to the first German trench. Four officers were killed on the same piece of ground. But the men went steadily on, though bereft of most of their leaders, and at the second line trench of the Germans, more strongly held than the first, were inspired for the ordeal before them by the sight of Captain and Adjutant A. P. Hamilton, who, though shot through the knee and suffering great pain, guided the operations as he moved from place to place, limping heavily. There was desperately fierce hand-to-hand work here and bomb firing parties were hard at it, clearing out every corner. One man performed a particularly brave act and a shrewd one to boot. He came alone into a German communication trench beyond the reserve line. In a minute a bright thought struck him, and as quickly as possible he bundled the sandbags down into the trench, and so formed a barricade. The Germans came back, just as he had anticipated, and as they clambered over, so he shot them. We got rid of thirteen in this way, and the enemy gave up that passage and retired.

Captain Hamilton remained in this second line trench reorganising and encouraging the men until the consolidation was well advanced. He was awarded the Military Cross for his services. The official record says, "He had to be ordered back for medical attendance." Indeed, the only way that could be found to prevent Captain Hamilton from stubbornly going on till he bled to death was to place him under arrest.

The London Irish had thus magnificently succeeded in the task allotted to them—the capture of a section of the German second line trenches. Carried away by their excessive impetuosity, they also helped to clear the Germans out of the village of Loos, which they were among the first to enter. They were still untroubled and unperplexed. "When the village was about half cleared," says Rifleman T. J. Culley, in a letter to Sister Celestine, of the Homes for Destitute Catholic Children in London, "could you have peered into one of the estaminets which was still inhabited, you would have perceived one of the Irish calmly asking a most attractive and business-like madame for a *café au lait*, and being served amid torrents of shot and shell; and when he was finished he slung his arms and calmly walked on to do further death-dealing deeds." Culley adds that when the village was eventually cleared some of the New Army passed through the thinned ranks of the Territorials to carry on the advance. "You may have noticed in the papers," he says, "that the credit of capturing the village went to the New Army. This is not so. The Territorials, with the London Irish among their leaders, should be given the honour."

But the real trial of the London Irish was now to begin. The Germans on the Sunday launched a tremendous counter-attack. Would the London Irish be able to beat it back, and hold on to the trenches they had taken until relief came? Again and again, there seemed to be no possible escape from the

destruction which imminently menaced them. "All Monday passed and still no relief came," writes a rifleman of the battalion. "Indeed, it was a question whether any minute we should not be blown to atoms and the line swamped with a rush of the enemy. We could hardly stand from fatigue, having been in action steadily since Saturday morning. 'Fight on, lads,' said an officer who was afterwards killed. 'Remember the Division looks to you. This is bound to end sooner or later. Let it be in a way that will never be forgotten when they hear of it at home in London and Ireland.' So we fought on, and never a single German got nearer than a dozen yards from our lines. Soon we got the word that we should be relieved early Tuesday morning under cover of the darkness. The announcement sent a thrill of joy through us, for then we knew we had won." As soon as they got to the back trenches in safety a huge cheer went up from all the others, "The London Irish—Hurroo!" "They shook us by the hands and took our rifles from our grasp and the kits from our backs in their eagerness to show their gratitude," says the same rifleman.

The General in command of the Brigade who stood and watched the battalion on their way to battle on Friday night, addressed the remnant afterwards and said: "Not only am I proud to have had the honour of being in command of such a regiment, but the whole Empire will be proud whenever, in after years, the history of the battle of Loos comes to be written, for I can tell you it was the London Irish who helped to save a whole British Army Corps. You have done one of the greatest actions of the war."

Thus the London Irish raised themselves on the pinnacle of a notable and conspicuous triumph. Thus they earned for themselves the name of "The Footballers of Loos."

CHAPTER XI

THE VICTORIA CROSS

A NOBLE BAND OF IRISH HEROES, OFFICERS AND MEN

THAT plain Cross of bronze, with the simple motto, "For Valour," is the most honoured and coveted military decoration in the world. It has been won in the present war, down to the end of 1915, by as many as twenty-one Irishmen, who have splendidly sustained their country's inspiring heritage of bravery on the battlefield.

Courage, bravery, valour, are, in a way, mysterious attributes. We all understand what they mean; we all regard them as noble and heroic; we all desire to be possessed of them. Yet we know that only to the few comparatively do they belong; and in a puzzled mood we ask ourselves—Why is it that in the face of death in warfare one man should be fearless and another timid and faint-hearted? It is supposed that most men are naturally cowards. I remember hearing a remarkable statement made by Archibald Forbes, a famous war correspondent of the past, in a lecture on his experiences as a journalist on the field of battle. He said there is infinitely less steadiness in the soldier of any nationality under fire than the civilian imagines. He had watched the conduct on the field of the armies

of eight European nations, and there was never an engagement in which he did not see what he called "a stampede," or, more explicitly, soldiers flying in the wild disorder of terror.

Forbes did not attempt to explain why this was so. He simply recorded the fact. To me it seems as if the quality which is commonly called cowardice is but a form of fear, and fear is an instinctive emotion which is to be seen displayed throughout the entire animal kingdom. It shows itself at a very early age in the shrinking apprehensiveness of the infant. The purpose of it appears to be that of self-protection and self-preservation. One of its first impulses is to avoid the danger which threatens by running away from it. We see that in the action of a horse harnessed to a vehicle which, by reason of a sudden fright, breaks from human restraint, and dashes wildly through the streets, endangering itself and everyone that crosses its course. Man is also prone to take flight under the pressure of fear for his life. Unlike the horse, he controls his actions by reason, more or less. But to fly from danger is, in most circumstances, allowable to the civilian, under the law of self-preservation. He can run away without any hurt to his self-esteem, or any risk of being called a coward.

It is a crime for a soldier on the field to turn his back on danger. Of course there is nothing despicable in a retirement under orders when faced with overwhelming odds. We can see Wellington at Salamanca, caught in the *mêlée* of a British flight before a dashing charge of French cavalry—as Maxwell saw him, "With his straight sword drawn, riding at full speed, and smiling." He fled that he might live, and win the battle. But the soldier must stand firm when the shells are bursting terrifically around him and the bullets whistle their death tune in his ears, or advance undauntedly towards the hidden enemy, who thus

menace him with death and mutilation, until a command or a bullet stops him.

Yet even in the soldier to shrink from pain, danger and death is a natural impulse, for it is one of the instincts of which no amount of training and discipline can entirely divest humanity. President Abraham Lincoln was very reluctant to sanction the execution of soldiers for cowardice during the American Civil War. He used to say it was impossible for a man always to control his legs. "How do I know," he would ask, "that I should not run away myself?" Happily there are things which help to sustain and embolden the soldier in that terrible trial. Some of these enheartening influences are external to the soldier himself. His country's cause and the reputation of his regiment help to brace him for the ordeal. The companionship of his comrades in a common danger and the fury and tumult of battle are also very animating. But in the last resort the soldier must rely upon his own innate qualities, both mental and physical. For bravery lies in the blood, and courage in the mind, and valour is the combination of the often thoughtless fire and dash of the one, and the calculated enterprise and determination of the other.

Bearing these considerations always in mind, let us never cast the contumelious stone, or say a bitter word, against any regiment, or party of men, who in war are overborne by the black terror of apprehension suddenly arising; but rather let us ever give the greater honour and glory to those rare beings, those supermen, who without a thought of self, dash into the fiery blast to save a stricken comrade, or who strike a ringing blow for their cause under the jaws of horrid death, whose hands are stretched out to clutch them.

In the light of these general reflections on human nature let us consider first the achievement of

Drummer William Kenny, who, though serving in the 2nd Battalion of the Gordon Highlanders, is a Drogheda man. Near Ypres, on October 23rd, 1914, he exposed himself to heavy fire on five separate occasions, in order to rescue wounded men. Twice previously he saved machine-guns by carrying them out of action. "Also on numerous occasions," says the official record, "Drummer Kenny conveyed urgent messages in very dangerous circumstances over fire-swept ground." What makes Kenny's heroism very remarkable is that it was not displayed in a single instance, by one act; but was, as we see, repeated over and over again, and in a variety of ways.

He is a very modest as well as fearless man. I saw him at the Mansion House, London, one day in March, 1915, when he was presented with a gold watch by the Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Musicians' Company. The first thing that caught my attention in his appearance was the mingled kindliness and resolution expressed in his face. It was obvious, from his shy manner, that he was greatly embarrassed, if not made quite miserable, indeed, by being so much noticed, and would have rather remained in the background. "Thank you all," was his simple acknowledgment of the Company's expressions of admiration and regard. He is also a reticent man. Not a word did he say to anyone about his exploits until the announcement that he had been awarded the Victoria Cross appeared in the newspapers. Even then, he declined to be regarded as a hero. "It was just what anyone would do in the circumstances," he said. "There are many others out there who have done the same thing, only nobody knows it. You see some of your pals lying out in the open under fire. You know it is they or you; so you just go out and fetch them in." It was the same in regard to his single-handed action in saving the machine-guns. "The Maxims had to be

fetched," he said; "and I did it. That's all." As a case of unobtrusive and, indeed, unconscious heroism that of Drummer Kenny would be hard to beat.

His native town of Drogheda has reason to be proud of Kenny, and it showed its esteem in a splendid way. On St. Patrick's Day, 1915, the Mayor and Corporation went to High Mass with Kenny, who was accompanied by his mother and father; and afterwards, at a public meeting in the square, attended by an enormous crowd, the noble fellow was presented with a cheque for £120, and the freedom of the borough. When he wrote his name on the roll of Drogheda's freemen, Kenny found among the preceding signatures those of such famous historical personages as the Duke of Ormond (1704); Henry Grattan (1782); Sir Arthur Wellesley (1807); Isaac Butt (1877); Charles Stewart Parnell (1881), and Sir Garnet Wolseley (1882).

The deeds of three other Irishmen who have won the Victoria Cross were, like those of Kenny, deeds of mercy—the rescue of wounded comrades. For a full appreciation of them it is necessary to understand the awful plight of the soldiers who are stricken down on the unsheltered open ground between the opposing trenches. When the engagement in which the men fell is over this space is swept, on the slightest movement, by volleys from rifles and machine-guns. It is often impossible, therefore, to bring timely help to the wounded. At night only, in the sheltering darkness, some of the least disabled wounded may be able to crawl back to their trenches. Otherwise they have to lie out there in the open while life ebbs away to the most bitter torments. That is, unless there are at hand men moved by the unselfish and tender emotion of pity, men susceptible to suffering, men of refined and imaginative minds; and therefore able to project themselves by the power of thought into the cruel

situation of their tortured and helpless mates, and feel to the full all the horror of it; and men, too, whose high ideal of duty and right conduct impel them irresistibly to go out to succour, even at the risk of meeting the same terrible fate themselves. Of such noble men are Drummer Kenny, and also Lance-Corporal Joseph Toombs, 1st Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment, who comes from Warrenpoint, Co. Down; Private Robert Morrow, 1st Royal Irish Fusiliers, a native of Co. Tyrone, and Private John Caffrey, 2nd York and Lancaster Regiment, who was born at Birr, King's County, and has his home in Nottingham.

The official account of the achievements for which Toombs was awarded the Victoria Cross is as follows:—

"For most conspicuous gallantry near Rue du Bois on June 16th, 1915. On his own initiative he crawled out repeatedly under a very heavy shell and machine-gun fire to bring in wounded men who were lying about one hundred yards in front of our trenches. He rescued four men, one of whom he dragged back by means of a rifle sling placed round his own neck and the man's body. This man was so severely wounded that unless he had been immediately attended to he must have died."

Morrow got the V.C. "for most conspicuous bravery near Messines, on April 12th, 1915, when he rescued and carried successfully to places of comparative safety several men who had been buried under the debris of trenches wrecked by shell fire. Private Morrow carried out this gallant work on his own initiative and under very heavy fire from the enemy." I am able to supplement this official record by a statement made by one of the men who was saved by Morrow: "The enemy opened fire unexpectedly. A shell fell in the trench, burying over a dozen men, of whom I was one, in the wreckage. Those who were able ran to shelter, for that shell was followed by many

more; and the trench having been laid bare, the enemy opened a hot rifle and machine-gun fire upon it. At the same time the enemy was making an attack in force. Accordingly it was a risky thing to be there. Morrow didn't mind. He came up to where we were pinned under the remains of the parapet and a dug-out. He dragged me out and carried me on his back to a place of safety. Then he went back to look for others. He made the journey six times, bringing all the men that were alive. It was slow, laborious work, and all the time Morrow was under heavy fire from the Germans."

On the same day that the notice of Private Morrow's distinction was published, his death was announced in the list of casualties. He was killed on April 25th, 1915, at St. Julien, while in the act of again succouring the wounded. His widowed mother, at Newmills, Dungannon, received the Victoria Cross that was awarded to her gallant boy with an autograph letter of sympathy from the King.

Private John Caffrey got the Victoria Cross for a gallant display of bravery and humanity near La Brique on November 16th, 1915. A man of the West Yorkshire Regiment had been badly wounded, and was lying in the open, unable to move, in full view of, and about 300 to 400 yards from, the enemy's trenches. Corporal Stirk, Royal Army Medical Corps, and Caffrey at once started out to rescue him, but at the first attempt they were driven back by shrapnel fire. Soon afterwards they started again, under close sniping and machine-gun fire, and succeeded in reaching and bandaging the wounded man, but, just as Corporal Stirk had lifted him on Private Caffrey's back, he himself was shot in the head. Caffrey put down the wounded man, bandaged Corporal Stirk, and helped him back into safety. He then returned and brought in the man of the West Yorkshire Regi-

ment. "He had made three journeys across the open, under close and accurate fire," says the official record, "and had risked his own life to save others with the utmost coolness and bravery."

No more moving story of the devotion of a private to an officer, to whom he was regimentally attached, is to be found than that enshrined in the record of the deed for which the Victoria Cross was given to Private Thomas Kenny, 13th (Service) Battalion Durham Light Infantry, part of "Kitchener's Army." Kenny, aged thirty-three, was living with his wife and seven children, and following the occupation of a quarryman, at Hart Bushes, a hamlet two miles outside Wingate, County Durham, when on the outbreak of war he joined the Army. His battalion was sent to the front on August 25th, 1915. On the night of November 4th, 1915, Kenny won the Victoria Cross near La Houssoie, for conspicuous bravery and devotion to Lieutenant Brown of his battalion. The deed is finely described in a letter written by Major C. E. Walker, of the 13th Durham Light Infantry:—

"I just want to write to you to tell you how proud we all are of your husband, Pte. T. Kenny, for the magnificent pluck and endurance he showed under very heavy fire when Lieut. P. A. Brown was wounded. Your husband was what we call 'observer' to Lieut. Brown—that is to say, he acted as a sort of shadow to his officer, who never moved anywhere without him. The Lieutenant went out in front of our trenches in a thick fog to superintend a party of our men mending our barbed wire, Kenny, as usual, accompanying him. They over-ran our wire and lost their bearings in the fog. Finding that they were on unfamiliar ground they sat down to listen for sounds to guide them. After a while they decided to go back. As soon as they rose a rifle was fired from a listening post about 15 yards away. (They were only about 30 yards from the enemy trenches, and a listening post runs out from their front line.) Lieut. Brown fell, shot through both thighs. Kenny at once went to his assistance, and although Lieut. Brown was a good-sized man, got him slung on to his back and started off with him.

"The Germans in the listening post—there are generally four to six there—opened rapid fire at him. He therefore dropped to his hands and knees and began crawling, with the officer still on his back. Lieut. Brown was hit about 9.45. Kenny carried him in this manner, under heavy fire from the enemy every time they heard him, for over an hour in spite of the wet, clinging nature of the ground At last he came to a ditch he recognised, and being utterly exhausted, he made the Lieutenant as comfortable as he could and then started off for our lines for help. He found an officer and a few men of his battalion at a listening post, and having guided them back to where he had left his officer, Lieutenant Brown was brought in still living, but died at the dressing station. His last words were, 'Kenny—you're a hero!' The General is delighted with the pluck, endurance, and devotion shown by your husband, and has recommended him for the Victoria Cross. Kenny is a splendid fellow, and you may well be proud of him."

Lieutenant Brown's mother wrote from Beckenham, Kent, to Kenny, expressing her deep gratitude for his services to her son: "I am thankful to feel that he died among friends and that he was able to thank you," she says. "I know you will value his last words He had often mentioned you to me in his letters home, and talked of 'my observer Kenny, a very nice Irishman from Co. Durham, who goes with me everywhere.' His life had been a very different one before this dreadful war, but he gave up everything for pure patriotism."

These are rare, fine, and noble actions. They are not necessarily actions which only a true soldier could accomplish. They are the outcome of fortitude, that spirit which supports a man to go through with a tremendous task, involving pain of body and trouble of mind, but a task from which his sense of duty will not permit him to turn aside; and fortitude is a quality found not uncommonly in the ordinary daily round of civil life as well as on the battlefield. The other awards of the Victoria Cross to Irishmen were made for deeds of quite a different character; real

soldierly deeds, bold, dashing, and intrepid; deeds, if not of reckless bravery, certainly of bravery reckless of life for the attainment of the purpose in view. In a word, they are deeds more representative of the traditional fiery fearlessness of Celtic valour.

There is the case of Private Edward Dwyer, of the East Surrey Regiment, who was born at Fulham, London, of Irish parents, his father being a Galway man and his mother a native of Omeath. I saw him one sunny day in July, 1915, coming down the Strand at the head of a recruiting procession, and his appearance gave me at first a shock of surprise. I do not know why it should be so, but it is the fact that we usually associate intrepidity and resolution with men of powerful physique and demeanour that suggests fearlessness. Perhaps the illusion has taken its rise from misty recollections of the heroes of the fiction-reading of our youth. That illusion has been dispelled, for me, at least, by those V.C.-men of the war whom I have seen, and I have seen several of them. In all of them, without exception, I should say it was the mind that told and not so much the body. Dwyer looked quite a boy, and one of small stature, too, as he walked that day between two burly sergeants, to whose shoulders his head just about reached. But I could see the Victoria Cross of dark bronze and its red ribbon on the left breast of his khaki tunic. His hearty laughter and smiles told of his pride and joy in the demonstration, of which he was the central figure—silk-hatted men baring their heads to him; women, young and old, pressing forward to kiss him; and the air filled with shoutings and the blare of brass instruments. Then, from the plinth of the Nelson Monument in Trafalgar Square, standing between two of Landseer's great lions, he made a sprightly recruiting speech. "I promise you this," said he, "a drink and a cigar for the first ten recruits to come up here.

Age is nothing. I was only sixteen when I joined. I think the recruiting-sergeant must have been a little short-sighted on purpose, because he enlisted me without any trouble. Out at the Front there are men who are grey-headed. Doesn't it shame you?" he cried, turning sharply to the young men in the crowd.

What was it that was done by this youngest of the V.C.'s this stripling of eighteen who, before he enlisted, was a messenger-boy to a greengrocer? He displayed "most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty" at Hill 60 on April 20th, 1915; and he did so in a very singular way. "When his trench was heavily attacked by German grenade throwers," says the official record, "he climbed on to the parapet, and although subjected to a hail of bombs at close quarters, succeeded in dispersing the enemy by the effective use of his hand grenades." Those vague, general terms do not enable us to see the episode. It discloses itself vividly in the terse sentences of Dwyer himself:—

"All our chaps were either killed or wounded. I was the only unwounded man left in the trench. The Germans were in a trench only fifteen yards away, so close that I could hear them talking in their lingo. I knew that if they took the trench I was in it would be a bad job for our trenches behind. So I collected all the hand grenades left in our trench until I had about a hundred in all. There were three steps leading up to the parapet of the trench. For a while I sat crouched on the middle step. Then I found myself on the parapet hurling grenades at the Germans. Shells and hand bombs were bursting all over and around me, but nothing touched me at all. I kept on throwing until help came and the trench was safe. I was pretty well done up when I jumped down into the trench, mad with joy and without a scratch. The relieving party chaffed me a lot, and called me 'The King of the Hand Grenades.'"

Dwyer gives an interesting account of his sensations in battle. As a rule, introspection in such

circumstances is almost impossible, for the mind, when concentrated solely on the existing situation and strained with excitement almost to the cracking point, cannot well observe itself; but Dwyer is made of uncommon stuff mentally as well as physically. "Fear is a funny thing," he says. "It gets at you in all kinds of curious ways. When we've been skirmishing in open order under heavy fire I've felt myself go numb. Then the blood has rushed into my face—head and ears become as hot as fire, and the tip of my tongue swollen into a blob of blood. It isn't nice, I can tell you; but the feeling passes and one's nerves become steadier." He added what showed his real mettle: "I've never expected to get out of any fight I've ever been in. And so I just try to do my bit, and leave it at that." Dwyer made a most successful recruiter for the Irish regiments, in which, on account of his nationality, he specially interested himself.

Turning now for a while from the Irish privates to the Irish regimental officers who have won the V.C., we find the same pluck, endurance, and devotion to duty displayed. Second Lieutenant George Arthur Boyd-Rochfort, of the 1st Battalion Scots Guards, is a type of the Irish gentry who have contributed to the British Army so remarkably large a number of gallant regimental officers and distinguished commanders, from the Duke of Wellington to Viscount French of Ypres. He had done no soldiering before the present war. The eldest son of the late Major R. H. Boyd-Rochfort, of the 15th Hussars, he succeeded to the family property at Middleton Park, Westmeath. Aged thirty-five, and the head of his family, all his interests centred in the work of the estate. Yet when the war broke out Mr. Boyd-Rochfort felt it his duty to join the Army, so that he might serve his country along with his younger

brothers—Captain H. Boyd-Rochfort, of the 21st Lancers (now Brigade-Major of the 21st Cavalry Brigade), and Lieutenant Cecil Boyd-Rochfort, of the Scots Guards. To qualify himself physically for a commission in the Scots Guards he had to undergo two operations, which confined him to hospital for close on five months. He got his commission in April, 1915, went to the Front in June, and won the Victoria Cross on August 3rd, in the trenches between Cambria and La Bassée.

Lieutenant Boyd-Rochfort was afterwards wounded in a single-handed fight with two Germans—he knocked one down with the butt-end of his empty revolver and the other with his fist—and was invalided home, when the whole countryside turned out to do him honour. He gave the following account of his exploit:—

"It was at break of day, just before we were ordered to 'stand to,' we were working in the first line of trenches, and a trench that was nothing more than a graveyard. The first German trench was no more than fifty yards away, and their mortars and rifle grenades were simply spilling into us. Our trench was getting badly knocked about by the flying missiles. You must distinguish between these mortars and shells, because the mortars have a time fuse which explodes them without striking. I was just raising my head over the front of the trench, and, hearing the whiz, I said to my men, 'Look out.' Down they went. The bomb landed, and started to roll down from the top of the trench. I dashed forward and seized it, and threw it over the top of trench. Scarcely had it left my hand and reached the outside of the trench than it exploded with a terrific report. We were all buried under falling earth, but fortunately no one was hurt, although my cap was blown to pieces. My men were very appreciative of my action, and cheered and thanked me. Afterwards they wrote and signed a statement of what I had done, which they handed to the Colonel."

Another gallant Meath man was the late Lieutenant Maurice James Dease, 4th Batt. Royal Fusiliers (City

of London Regiment), who fell during the retreat from Mons, and was the first officer to gain the Victoria Cross in the great war. He was the only son of Mr. Edmund F. Dease, Culmullen, Drumree, Meath, and heir-presumptive to his uncle, Major Gerald Dease, of Turbotston, Westmeath. He was born September 28th, 1889, and was educated at Stonyhurst and at the Army Class, Wimbledon College. He entered the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, and was gazetted Second Lieutenant in the Royal Fusiliers in February, 1910, becoming Lieutenant in 1912. In the same year he was apointed machine-gun officer to his regiment, and it was whilst in command of this section at Nimy, near Mons, on August 23rd, 1914, that Lieutenant Dease was killed and awarded the Victoria Cross. The official record is as follows :—

"During the action the machine-guns were protecting the crossing over a canal bridge, and Lieutenant Dease was several times severely wounded, but refused to leave the guns. He remained at his post until all the men of his detachment were either killed or wounded and the guns put out of action by the enemy's fire."

From the South of Ireland came the late Captain Gerald Robert O'Sullivan, 1st Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, who won the V.C. in Gallipoli. A son of the late Lieutenant-Colonel George Ledwill O'Sullivan, 91st Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, and of Mrs. O'Sullivan, of Rowan House, Dorchester, he was born at Frankfield, near Douglas, county Cork, and spent most of his boyhood in Dublin. He passed into Sandhurst in 1907, and was gazetted to the Inniskillings on May 15th, 1909. Captain O'Sullivan was awarded the V.C. for conspicuous gallantry on two occasions, the official record of his deeds being as follows :—

"For most conspicuous bravery during the operations south-west of Krithia, on the Gallipoli Peninsula. On the night of

July 1st–2nd, 1915, when it was essential that portion of a trench which had been lost should be regained, Captain O'Sullivan, although not belonging to the troops at this point, volunteered to lead a party of bomb-throwers to effect the recapture. He advanced in the open under very heavy fire, and in order to throw his bombs with greater effect got up on the parapet, where he was completely exposed to the fire of the enemy occupying the trench. He was finally wounded, but not before his inspiring example had led on his party to make further efforts, which resulted in the capture of the trench. On the night of June 18th-19th, 1915, Captain O'Sullivan saved a critical situation in the same locality by his great personal gallantry and good leading."

This gallant officer is believed to have been killed during the attack on Hill 70, or Burnt Hill, at Suvla Bay, on August 21st, 1915. He advanced at the head of his men to the second line of Turkish trenches, where he fell. The body was not recovered.

From the North of Ireland came the late Captain Anketell Moutray-Read, of the 1st Northamptonshire Regiment, who was killed on the night of September 24-25th, 1915, at the Battle of Loos, and was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. He was the youngest son of the late Colonel John Moutray-Read, of Aghnacloy, County Tyrone, and one of his ancestors was High Sheriff of the county as far back at 1721. Owing to casualties in the Northamptons Captain Moutray-Read was in temporary command of the battalion when he fell. The official record of the award of the Victoria Cross is as follows:—

"For most conspicuous bravery during the first attack near Hulluch on the morning of September 25th, 1915. Although partially gassed, Captain Read went out several times in order to rally parties of different units which were disorganised and retiring. He led them back into the firing line, and, utterly regardless of danger, moved freely about encouraging them under a withering fire. He was mortally wounded while carrying out this gallant work. Captain Read had previously shown conspicuous bravery during digging operations on August 29th, 30th, and 31st, 1915, and on the night of July 29th-30th he

carried out of action an officer, who was mortally wounded, under a hot fire from rifles and grenades."

In all the theatres of war representatives of that famous fighting stock, the Irish gentry, are to be found defending the British Empire by maintaining the martial reputation of their race. At Shariba, Mesopotamia, the late Major George Godfrey Massy Wheeler, 7th Hariana Lancers, Indian Army, won the Victoria Cross for "most conspicuous bravery." He was a descendant of General Sir Hugh Massy Wheeler, whose son, John George Wheeler, was married to a Miss Massy, of Kingswell House, Tipperary. "On April 12th, 1915," says the official record, "Major Wheeler asked permission to take out his squadron and attempt to capture a flag which was the centre point of a group of the enemy who were firing on one of our pickets. He advanced and attacked the enemy's infantry with the lance, doing considerable execution amongst them. He then retired while the enemy swarmed out of hidden ground and formed an excellent target to our Royal Horse Artillery guns. On April 13th, 1915, Major Wheeler led his squadron to the attack of the 'North Mound.' He was seen far ahead of his men, riding single-handed straight for the enemy's standards. This gallant officer was killed on the mound."

In another far-distant and remote field of operations, the German protectorate of the Cameroons, West Africa, a scion of the same stock of Irish gentry likewise achieves glory, leading blacks against blacks led by Germans. There the hero is Captain John Fitzharding Paul Butler, of the famous Butlers of Ormond, Tipperary, attached to the Pioneer Company, Gold Coast Regiment, West African Frontier Force. "On November 17th, 1914," says the record, "with a party of thirteen men, he went into the thick

brush and attacked the enemy, in strength about one hundred, including several Europeans, defeated them and captured their machine-guns, and many loads of ammunition. On December 27th, 1914, when on patrol duty with a few men, he swam the Ekan River, which was held by the enemy, completed his reconnaissance on the further bank, and returned in safety. Two of his men were wounded while he was actually in the water." Bald as the story is, thus officially told, it kindles the imagination, and we can picture the wild and hazardous life led by this adventurous Irishman in that mysterious land of mountain and forest.

The Brookes of Colebrooke have been settled in Fermanagh since the time of Queen Elizabeth. If you look through Burke's "Peerage and Baronetage" you will see that in every generation the family have given sons to the Army and Navy. Lieutenant J. A. O. Brooke (grandson of the late Sir Arthur Brinsley Brooke of Colebrooke, baronet), 2nd Gordon Highlanders, has crowned the martial reputation of the family by winning the Victoria Cross. Near Gheluvelt, on October 29th, 1914, he led two attacks on the German trenches under heavy rifle and machine-gun fire, and regained a lost trench at a very critical time. He was killed at the moment of success. "By his marked coolness and promptitude on this occasion," says the official record, "Lieutenant Brooke prevented the enemy from breaking through our line at a time when a general counter-attack could not have been organised." Two Victoria Crosses have thus been won for the Gordon Highlanders by Irishmen—Drummer Kenny and Lieutenant Brooke.

CHAPTER XII

"FOR VALOUR"

STORIES OF OTHER V.C.'S, INCLUDING MICHAEL O'LEARY, WHO UPHELD IRELAND'S TRADITION OF GALLANTRY

In order to be able rightly to appreciate the honour and glory of the Victoria Cross, it is necessary to know the conditions regulating its bestowal. A tradition has been established in the Services, though there is nothing in the institution of the Victoria Cross really to warrant it, that the decoration is to be given only for a deed not done under orders. The deed must be a signal one in every respect—exceptionally daring, and difficult, of the highest military value, particularly in the saving of life, and, with all this, absolutely voluntary.

Nevertheless, it will be noticed that in none of the deeds of all these bold, brave, and intrepid Irishmen is there the slightest suggestion of seeking fame and glory at the cannon's mouth. "I almost gasped," said Private Dwyer, "when I was told I was awarded the V.C." Each of the others appears to have been likewise unconscious of his heroism. He did not go and do what he did, thinking of being mentioned in despatches or decorated. He was concerned only about doing what at the moment he felt to be his duty. Fame and glory were probably never farther from his thoughts than at the very time he was

winning them for ever. For the roll of the Victoria Cross, on which his name and deed are commemorated, is imperishable; and his glorious memory will shine as long as Great Britain and Ireland endure.

For sheer daring, contempt of risks, resourcefulness, and extraordinary physical powers, a high place must be given to the action by which Corporal William Cosgrave, 1st Royal Munster Fusiliers, won the Victoria Cross in Gallipoli. It took place on April 26th, 1915, the day after the famous landing of the Dublins and Munsters at "Beach V," when the survivors of these battalions were advancing to the attack on the Turkish positions on the heights of Sedd-el-Bahr. The first defensive obstacles encountered were barbed wire entanglements of exceptional strength and intricacy, behind which was a trench of enemy riflemen and machine-guns. "Those entanglements," says Sir Ian Hamilton, "were made of heavier metal and longer barbs than I have ever seen elsewhere." A party of the Munsters were sent forward to cut them down, but the men's pliers had not strength and sharpness enough to snip the wires. Then it was that Cosgrave, a giant in stature and vigour—6 ft. 5 in. in height and only twenty-three years of age—"pulled down the posts of the enemy's high wire entanglements single-handed, notwithstanding a terrific fire from both front and flanks, thereby greatly contributing to the successful clearing of the heights," to quote the official record. The deed has a distinction peculiarly its own, for it is the only thing of the kind to be found in the long roll of the Victoria Cross.

Cosgrave was wounded in the bayonet charge which subsequently carried the trench. A bullet struck him in the side, and passing clear through him splintered his backbone. He was invalided home to Aghada, a little fishing hamlet in County Cork, where he was

born and reared and worked as a farm boy until he enlisted in 1910. Seen there, he told the story of his exploit, as one of the party of fifty Munsters ordered to rush forward and remove the entanglements:—

"Sergeant-Major Bennett led us, but just as we made a dash a storm of lead was concentrated on us; Sergeant-Major Bennett was killed with a bullet through his brain. I then took charge and shouted to the boys to come on. The dash was quite one hundred yards, and I don't know whether I ran or prayed the faster. I wanted to succeed in my work, and I also wanted to have the benefit of dying with a prayer in my mind. Some of us having got up to the wires we started to cut them with the pliers, but you might as well try to cut the round tower at Cloyne with a pair of lady's scissors. The wire was of great strength, strained like fiddle strings, and so full of spikes that you could not get the pliers between. Heavens! I thought we were done; I threw the pliers from me. 'Pull them up!' I roared to the fellows; and I dashed at one of the upright posts, put my arms round it, and heaved and strained at it until it came up in my arms, the same as you would lift a child.

"I believe there was great cheering when they saw what I was at, but I only heard the scream of bullets and saw dust rising all round me. Where they hit I do not know, or how many posts I pulled up. I did my best, and the boys that were with me did every bit as good as myself.

"When the wire was down the rest of the lads came through like devils and reached the trenches. We won about 200 yards' length by twenty yards deep and 700 yards from the shore. We met a brave, honourable foe in the Turks, and I am sorry that such decent fighting men were brought into the row by such dirty tricksters as the Germans."

In Sir Ian Hamilton's despatch describing the storming of "Beach W"—close to "Beach V"—by the Lancashire Fusiliers, there are some striking passages relating to men of the battalion who rushed forward to cut passages through the entanglements. "Again the heroic wire-cutters came out. Through glasses they could be seen quietly snipping away under a hellish fire, as if they were pruning a vineyard." For his gallantry in this undertaking Private

William Keneally, one of the many Irishmen in the Lancashires, got the Victoria Cross. The distinction is greatly enhanced by the fact that Keneally was selected by his comrades in the ranks as the one among them best entitled to it. The official record says:—

"On April 25th, 1915, three companies and the Headquarters of the 1st Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, in effecting a landing on the Gallipoli Peninsula to the west of Cape Helles, were met by a very deadly fire from hidden machine-guns which caused a great number of casualties. The survivors, however, rushed up to and cut the wire entanglements, notwithstanding the terrific fire from the enemy, and, after overcoming supreme difficulties, the cliffs were gained and the position maintained. Amongst the many very gallant officers and men engaged in this most hazardous undertaking, Captain Willis, Sergeant Richards, and Private Keneally have been selected by their comrades as having performed the most signal acts of bravery and devotion to duty."

Precedents for the choice of a comrade by his fellows to wear the V.C. on their behalf are to be found in the records of the Indian Mutiny, and it is an interesting fact that in each case the man chosen was an Irishman serving in an English or Scottish regiment. In September, 1857, the Cross was awarded to Private John Divane, of the 60th King's Roval Rifles, for successfully heading a charge against the trenches at Delhi. Divane was elected by the privates of his regiment for the distinction. In November of the same year Lance-Corporal J. Dunley, 93rd Highlanders, the first man of the regiment to enter the Secundra Bagh with Captain Burroughs, whom he supported against heavy odds, was similarly chosen by his comrades for the V.C., and likewise Lieutenant A. K. Ffrench, 53rd Regiment, who showed distinguished gallantry on the same occasion, was elected by his brother officers to wear the decoration.

Keneally was born in Parnell Street, Wexford, in

1886. His father, Colour-Sergeant John Stephen Keneally, served for twenty-four years in the Royal Irish Regiment. In 1890 Keneally's parents removed to Wigan. The father got work as a miner in the Wigan coalfield, and the son, at the age of thirteen, started in the same life as a pit-boy. William afterwards joined the Army, served for six years, and on returning to civil life worked again in the pits. On the outbreak of war he rejoined his old regiment, the Lancashire Fusiliers, and was then one of five brothers serving with the Colours. The brave fellow did not survive to enjoy the honour of having the V.C. pinned to his breast by the King. He was wounded on July 29th, 1915, in the course of an attack on a Turkish position, which was repulsed, and was never seen afterwards. "It is a matter of sincere regret to me," says the King in a kindly letter to the hero's father, "that the death of Private Keneally deprived me of the pride of personally conferring on him the Victoria Cross—the greatest of all military distinctions."

For quite a different achievement the Victoria Cross was awarded to Sergeant John Hogan, 2nd Battalion Manchester Regiment, an Irish lad who was brought up at Oldham, Lancashire. On October 29th, 1914, Hogan and Second Lieutenant Leach (who also got the V.C.) recaptured unassisted a trench that had been lost by the regiment. Two attempts to retake the trench in force having been repulsed, Leach and Hogan voluntarily set out one morning to try to recover it themselves. The trench was about sixty yards' distance from the nearest German trench. It did not run in a straight line, but took a zig-zag course, consisting of a number of traverses in this form :—

Though it was held by the Germans, its connection with the other British trenches was not cut off. Starting at one end of the trench, Leach and Hogan drove the Germans out of each traverse, one after the other, by putting their right hands round each corner and firing their revolvers, while they kept their bodies concealed. It happened that the Germans were armed only with rifles, and those weapons they could not use without exposing themselves to the revolver fire of their attackers. Thus favoured, Leach and Hogan advanced by crawling on their stomachs, capturing corner after corner, and section after section, until they got near to the other end of the trench, when they heard a voice exclaiming in English, "Don't shoot; the Germans want to surrender." The speaker was one of their own men, who had been taken prisoner by the Germans when they captured the trench. Altogether Leach and Hogan killed eight Germans, wounded twenty, and took sixteen prisoners. It was a peculiar exploit, cleverly planned, and daringly executed. The story of how Private John Lynn, 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers, a County Tyrone man, won the V.C., is inspiring for its bravery and endurance. Near Ypres on May 2nd, 1915, as the Germans were advancing behind their wave of asphyxiating gas, Private Lynn, although almost overcome by the deadly fumes, handled his machine-gun with very great effect against the enemy, and when he could not see them he moved his gun higher up on the parapet, which enabled him to bring even more effective fire to bear, and eventually checked any further advance. The great courage displayed by this soldier had a fine effect on his comrades in the very trying circumstances. He died the following day from the effects of gas poisoning.

"It's a long, long way to Tipperary," says the soldier's favourite song. But, long as it is, Sergeant

James Somers, 1st Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, brought there the Victoria Cross from Gallipoli, when he came home invalided to stay with his parents at Cloughjordan, in September, 1915. Naturally, the Tipperary village was decorated, and the hero was received by Tipperary crowds, with bands and banners; and, better still, War Loan stock to the value of £240, subscribed for by as many as 1,500 of the local Tipperary community, was presented to him at a public meeting by Major-General Friend, Commander of the Forces in Ireland. At the meeting Mr. B. Trench, secretary to the reception committee, made the remarkable statement that out of a total of eighty Victoria Crosses then awarded for services in the war eighteen had been won by Irishmen. "If the people of Great Britain had done as well," said Mr. Trench, "they ought, according to their population, to have received 220 Victoria Crosses."

Sergeant Somers is a well-built, good-looking young fellow of twenty-one, full of high spirits, and was boyishly delighted with all the attention paid to him in Ireland. His father was for several years sexton in the parish church, Belturbet, county Cavan; and he himself was a footman in Bantry House, county Cork, before he joined the Inniskilling Fusiliers in 1912. Like Dwyer, of the East Surreys, he got the V.C. for a daring bombing exploit. The official record of the award is as follows:—

"For most conspicuous bravery. On the night of July 1st–2nd, 1915, in the southern zone of the Gallipoli Peninsula, where, owing to hostile bombing, some of our troops had retired from a sap, Sergeant Somers remained alone on the spot until a party brought up bombs He then climbed over into the Turkish trench, and bombed the Turks with great effect. Later he advanced into the open, under heavy fire, and held back the enemy by throwing bombs into their flank until a barricade had been established. During this period he frequently ran to and from our trenches to obtain fresh

supplies of bombs. By his gallantry and coolness Sergeant Somers was largely instrumental in effecting the recapture of portion of our trench which had been lost."

Recounting his experiences, Sergeant Somers said that the Turks advanced to the trenches and compelled the Gurkhas and the Inniskillings to retire. He alone stopped in the trench, refusing to leave. He shot many Turks with his revolver, killed about fifty with bombs, and forced them to retire. The enemy, however, rushed into a sap trench, and he commenced to bombard them out of it, but twice he failed. Just before dawn he stole away for the purpose of getting men up to the trench to occupy it. Some of the officers said it was impossible to put the Turks out; but Somers returned to the position, taking with him a supply of grenades, under rifle and Maxim-gun fire, and eventually succeeded in bombing the Turks out of the sap trench. He had one narrow escape on the morning of July 2nd —a splinter struck him across the spine, but he rained in the bombs until he fell from loss of blood and fatigue in the afternoon. By that time, however, the trench had been recaptured. The Turks retreated crying, "Allah! Allah!" and "We gave them La La," said Somers with great glee. Somers tells all about it with great enthusiasm, and constantly recurring in his stories is the phrase, "I did my duty," or "General Sir Ian Hamilton told me when he made me King's Sergeant on the field that I did my duty"; and again, "I want to get back to duty." That was the main idea in this young Irishman's mind.

"For helping to bring the guns into action under heavy fire at Nery, near Compiègne, on September 1st, 1914, and, while severely wounded, remaining with them until all ammunition was exhausted, although he had been ordered to retire to cover."

This is the brief and cold official account of the thrilling deed for which the Victoria Cross was given to Sergeant David Nelson, L Battery, Royal Horse Artillery, a native of Derraghlands, Stranooden, county Monaghan. In all retreats the artillery is seriously handicapped, and it was so with the British artillery in the retreat from Mons. Still, they made many a gallant fight. One which stands out most conspicuously is that of L Battery, which fought for hours with one gun, and although outnumbered eight to one, succeeded in silencing the German artillery.

The battery of six guns had camped for the night by a farmhouse. At dawn, as they were watering their horses before continuing the retirement, they were shelled by a German battery of eight guns posted on a height overlooking the farm, not 700 yards away. This hill had been evacuated during the night by French cavalry without having given notice to the British. So fierce and destructive was the fire of the Germans that four guns of the L Battery were disabled, and many of the men and officers were stricken down within a few minutes. The survivors rushed to the two other guns and brought them into action. The fifth gun was quickly silenced by the killing of its entire detachment. It was the sixth gun, served by Nelson and three other men—Sergeant-Major Dornell, Gunner Derbyshire, and Driver Osborne—that, despite all the painful and distracting incidents happening in the farmyard, was worked with such speed and cool and deadly accuracy that the Germans were compelled to depart. The British gun was crippled and almost completely shattered, but it was saved. All the heroic gunners were badly wounded, and all were decorated. Nelson had one of his ribs so crushed in that it pressed upon his right lung. On his recovery he was promoted to a second lieutenancy.

The official record of the services of the 1st Canadian Division in Flanders shows that the late Company Sergeant-Major William Hall, 8th Canadian Infantry, who won the Victoria Cross near Ypres, was a native of Belfast. Hall was awarded the coveted distinction in the following circumstances: "On April 24th, 1915, in the neighbourhood of Ypres, when a wounded man who was lying some fifteen yards from the trench called for help, Company Sergeant-Major Hall endeavoured to reach him in the face of a very heavy enfilade fire which was being poured in by the enemy. The first attempt failed, and a non-commissioned officer and a private soldier who were attempting to give assistance were both wounded. Company Sergeant-Major Hall then made a second most gallant attempt, and was in the act of lifting up the wounded man to bring him in when he fell mortally wounded in the head." Sir Max Aitken, M.P., who has written the official record, states that Hall was originally from Belfast, but his Canadian home was in Winnipeg. He joined the 8th Battalion at Valcartier, Quebec, in August, 1914, as a private.

Finally we come to the epic of Michael O'Leary, of the Irish Guards, which remains the finest and most amazing feat of the war. I remember well that afternoon of Friday, February 19th, 1915, when the announcement of the award of the Victoria Cross to O'Leary was given to the public. It was sent out in the afternoon, so that it first appeared in the evening newspapers. The record was one of a dozen, each of which told a tale of thrilling adventure. Yet all the London evening papers with one accord seized upon the exploit of O'Leary's capture, single-handed, of two enemy barricades—thus saving his comrades from being mowed down by a machine-gun—and killing eight Germans in the process, as the "splash" line for their contents bills. "How

Michael O'Leary Won the V.C." "How Michael O'Leary, V.C., Kills Eight Germans and Takes Two Barricades." "The Wonderful Story of Michael O'Leary, V.C." Thus the streets of London flashed and resounded with the name of Michael O'Leary —that name which sounds so musically, and so irresistibly suggests the romance and dare-devildom of the Irish race, and under its spell people rushed to read the story of his deed. What appealed to the imagination was the touch of strangeness and fantasy in the exploit. How curious it all is, when one comes to think of it! As one is walking along a London street a name suddenly emerges out of the unknown, and lo! it is fixed in the memory with a halo for ever.

It was in the brickfields at Cuinchy, on February 1st, 1915, that Michael O'Leary won his enduring fame. Taken by surprise, the Coldstream Guards had lost a trench and failed to recapture it. The Irish Guards, who were in reserve, were told to have a try. No. 1 Company, in which O'Leary was Lance-Corporal, formed the storming party. They were only too glad of any excuse to get out of the mud and slush of their trenches. Before the main body advanced across the open ground—a brickfield, with here and there a stack of bricks—O'Leary, who, in fact, was off duty, and need not have joined in the attack at all, slipped away to the left towards a railway cutting. He had set out spontaneously on his own initiative to give the enemy a bit of a surprise. What would be the nature of the surprise, O'Leary himself did not quite know at the moment. It would all depend upon the development of the situation and the actual circumstances when the time came for him to decide. But for days before as he lay in the trenches he had brought his powers of observation into play, and having grasped all the essential details of the

geographical situation and the military position, he reasoned out a plan with himself.

According to that plan, the first thing he had to do was to get into the railway cutting on his left. This he did with all speed, and very soon afterwards he re-ascended to the top of the embankment and found himself almost in a direct line with the first German barricade, one of the brick stacks, about twenty or thirty yards square, and about twenty feet high and solid. With five shots he killed as many of the German defenders. Then seeing the headlong and irresistible dash of his comrades across the field he came to the conclusion that the remaining Germans had no chance of escape. So he quickly disappeared down the railway cutting once more, and again came up to the top on the right front of the second German barricade. Here there was a machine-gun. In fact the officer in command had just slewed round the gun on the Irish Guards still busy at the first barricade, and had his finger on the button to let go the hail of lead upon them when he was dropped by a bullet from O'Leary's rifle. Michael also shot two other Germans, and the remaining five surrendered by putting up their hands to the deadly, unerring marksman on the embankment.

Thus it happened that when the No. 1 Company of the Irish Guards got to the second barricade without a single casualty, instead of, as they had expected, serious loss of life, their surprise was turned into amazement on seeing O'Leary there before them in sole and complete possession of the place, with a German machine-gun and five prisoners as spoil. "How the divil did you get here, Mike!" Such was the exclamation of O'Leary's intimate comrades. Mike only realised that he had done something of importance and value, as well as of splendid gallantry, when officers and men crowded round him to shake his

hand. The commanding officer, Major the Hon. J. F. Trefusis, promoted him full sergeant on the field.

There must always be an element of chance or luck in such an abnormal achievement. But it is the man that is the thing. All the good fortune in the world would be without avail if the man were not of an exceptional type, possessed of perfect courage, marvellous self-confidence, and supreme resolution. Not less wonderful than what O'Leary did was the deliberate and efficient way in which he accomplished it. He knew that death might come at any moment. But he put the fear immediately aside lest it might in the least unnerve him in the pursuit of his purpose. Everything showed that he was in full possession of all his faculties.

What the United Kingdom thought of the deed was expressed by London in the tumultuous welcome which it gave to Sergeant Michael O'Leary, when, in his war-stained uniform, he drove through the streets with Mr. T. P. O'Connor, to speak in Hyde Park on Saturday afternoon, July 10th, 1915. There was terrific crushing and rushing on the part of hundreds of thousands of people eager to catch a glimpse of the hero—a slim youth of twenty-five, in khaki, with fair hair, and a pleasant smile lighting up his blue eyes and freckled face. No wonder, indeed. As Conan Doyle, the novelist, remarked: "No writer of fiction would dare to fasten such an achievement on any of his characters." And only a few years before Michael was helping to mind his father's stock on a little farm at Inchigeela, County Cork. So they made him an officer, Lieutenant O'Leary, of one of the Tyneside Irish battalions of the Northumberland Fusiliers. And rightly so, for he proved himself to be possessed of all the qualities of a leader—observation and reasoning, quick to receive impressions, and quick to act upon them—resource, daring, and yet

discretion, coolness and self-mastery in an enterprise of difficulty and danger. The two most damnable drawbacks on the field of battle are unpreparedness and slowness in officers, and stolidness and lack of initiative in men.

Well, Michael himself was never able fully to appreciate the gallantry of his action. What could be more modest than his letter to his father and mother on the subject:—

"Dear Parents—I know you will be glad to hear that I am awarded the Victoria Cross for conspicuous gallantry in the field. Hoping all are well, as I myself am in the best of health. From your fond son.—Michael."

There is the same simplicity, with a touch of humour, in the remark he made when being seen off at Victoria Station after all his glorification in London:—"It's glad I am to be going back to the trenches for a bit of a rest." And the only man in the whole wide world to show any desire to disparage Michael's exploit was Michael's father himself. The old man was asked if he was surprised at his son's bravery. "Surprised, is it!" he exclaimed. "What I am surprised at is that he didn't do more. Sure often myself I laid out ten Irishmen with a stick coming from Macroom Fair when I was a gossoon like Mick—Irishmen, mind you, an' stout hearty lads at that same. An' it was rather a bad fist Mick made of it that he could kill only eight Germans, and he having a rifle and bayonet." How is that for the old Irish spirit?

THE END

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Mr. John E. Redmond, M.P., and Mr. R. Barry O'Brien have issued an address in behalf of the Irish Nuns of Ypres, some extracts from which we publish below.

THE IRISH NUNS OF YPRES

AN APPEAL

The story of the Irish Nuns of Ypres is bound up with the story of Ireland. They represent not only a religious Order, but the national ideal as well. They stand for Faith and Fatherland. More than two hundred years ago an Irish Benedictine Community of Nuns was established in Big Ship Street, Dublin. Then came the war of the "Revolution" and the renewal of the international struggle between England and Ireland. . . .

The Dutchman whom the English made King offered security to the Irish Benedictine Nuns, should they elect to remain in their own land; but, as if visions of the future passed before them, they trusted him not. They sought an asylum beyond the seas, where, amid the vicissitudes of fortune, they ever turned their thoughts to Ireland, and in the days of her agony ceased not to pray for her redemption.

They took up their abode in Belgium; they made Ypres their home; and their convent, in its turn, became the refuge of many Irish exiles driven by injustice and oppression from the land of their birth. Wars swept over Europe. Belgium was desolated, even as she has been desolated to-day. Irish soldiers, too, played their part in those wars as they play their part in the struggle which is now convulsing the world—the part of valour and renown.

Fifteen years after the Irish nuns had settled in Ypres a great battle was fought at the other extremity of Belgium, on the famous field of Ramillies. In that fateful fight the Irish Brigade, in the service of France, held the village of Ramillies. The fight surged and raged around it, but the Irish kept their ground. Two of the flags which they had taken from the foe were deposited in the Irish Convent at Ypres, and a part of one of these flags was preserved by the faithful Irish nuns down to our own day. . . .

Once more war clouds gathered over Europe. Once more

Belgium was fated to become the victim of calamities which she did not provoke. The armies of Germany wantonly invaded her territory and cruelly devastated her homes. Ypres was bombarded and destroyed. The Irish Convent, often destined to escape the fury of the storm, now perished in the general ruin. The charred remains of its hospitable walls alone recall the historic memories with which its name shall for ever be associated.

Penniless, bereft of everything except the hope and determination to retrieve their fortunes, the nuns fled from Belgium and took refuge in England. . . .

In their trouble, anxiety, and distress they sought counsel with Irishmen to aid them in considering the best way of finding a suitable home in the old land. Providentially such a home offered itself in Merton House, Macmine, County Wexford. Recently the Mother Prioress and one of the nuns visited the place, and were pleased with it. Acting on the advice of their friends they resolved to purchase it. We now venture to appeal to Irishmen and Irishwomen in Ireland and abroad to help us in collecting the necessary funds. We make this appeal with confidence.

The nuns have told the story of their flight from Belgium in the book, *The Irish Nuns at Ypres*, published by Messrs. Smith, Elder, of London. The tale is an epic which will live in the history of those fearful times to the honour of the religious Order and the glory of womanhood. Fidelity to religious and national ideals has been their badge of distinction in every eventuality They shall have their reward. The heroism, the self-devotion, the religious faith, the Christian zeal and charity of those Irish nuns in a terrible crisis in the history of the Order will, we venture to say, command universal respect and admiration, mingled with pity for their fate, and an earnest desire, among all generous souls, to help them in retrieving their fortunes.

J. E. REDMOND, M.P.
R. BARRY O'BRIEN.

Subscriptions to "The Irish Nuns of Ypres Fund" will be received by J. E. Redmond, M.P., Aughavanagh, Aughrim, Co. Wicklow; R. Barry O'Brien, 100 Sinclair Road, Kensington, London; the Right Rev. Abbot Marmion, O.S.B., Edermine, Enniscorthy; Mr. M. J. O'Connor, Solicitor, Wexford; and the *Freeman's Journal*, Prince's Street, Dublin.

February, 1916.